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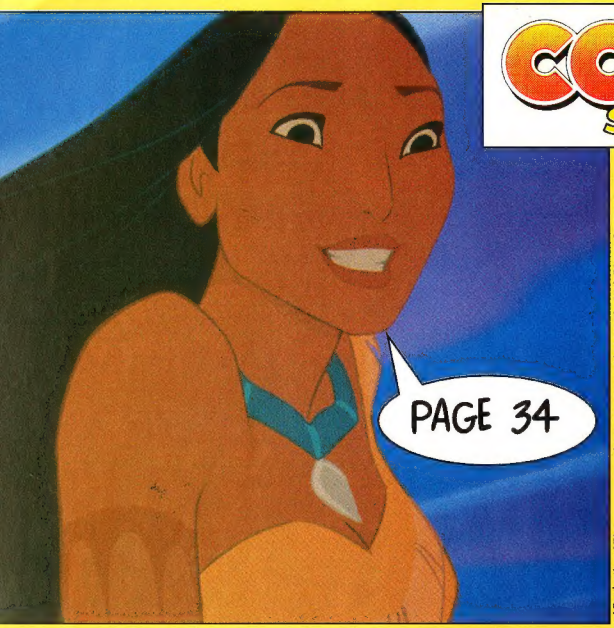

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Dredd Photo: Richard Blanshard/Copyright 1995 Cinergi Pictures Entertainment, Inc. & Cinergi Productions NV

On the Comics Scene

7 **DREDD TIDINGS**
Pat Mills renders the verdict on the Judge he helped create.

14 **WORD BALLOONS**
Now, Michael Stewart assumes the magazine's editorial voice.

16 **FAREWELL TO DON HECK**
The comics world loses another marvelous artist.

18 **LETTERING**

42 **CHRIS CLAREMONT SPEAKS**
The difference with "Sovereign Seven" is he owns it all.

On the Comics Screen

21 **FOREVER DARK KNIGHTS**
Akiva Goldsman helps bring Batman & Robin to the movies.

28 **FRIENDLY GHOSTS**
Casper haunts Hollywood in a special FX extravaganza.

34 **INDIAN LOVE STORY**
Disney animates a lovely tale of Pocahontas & John Smith.

48 **MAN BEHIND GARGOYLES**
Jonathan Frakes voices the TV show's cartoon baddie.

51 **SERIAL QUEEN**
Adventure called Adrian Booth by more than one name.

56 **OK, IS WALTER REED OVERWORKED?**
Not anymore. He's retired from all silver screen action.

66 **ANIMATION SCENE**
It's time for more Carl Stalling musical memories.

70 **THE REPORTER**
Prophet & Gen 13 are headed toward celluloid.

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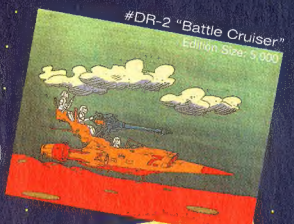

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DREDD TIDINGS

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

As Judge Dredd hits the big screen, Pat Mills takes a look back at his heroic origins.

Millions of moviegoers around the planet will be introduced to *Judge Dredd* this month by way of the new film starring Sylvester Stallone. *Dredd* already has a strong comic-book following, especially in England, but *none* of his readers have been following the series longer than Pat Mills.

Of course, how could they? Mills was present for the birth of *Judge Dredd* in Britain in the '70s. In fact, Mills was the creator and original editor of the famed British comic book *2000 A.D.*, where *Judge Dredd* first appeared. And he made several significant contributions to the strip after he was approached by creator John Wagner.

"John came to me with the idea of a cop who shoots people for dropping litter," recalls Mills. "I thought that was an excellent idea! I was smarting from the readers' rejection of any characters who were in any way vulnerable, and it seemed to me that this was really giving the readers what they *deserved*. 'You don't want characters who have any kind of pity? OK, we'll give you what you want!' That struck a chord in me."

Mills is quick to point out that Wagner is the actual creator of *Judge Dredd*, and defines his own role in the creative process very specifically. He is careful to note that the artwork also guided their direction. "I always refer to myself as the developer or sub-creator of *Judge Dredd*. The title was mine, much of Judge Dredd's world was mine and I wrote many of the early stories. But John Wagner created it. For want of a better term, I was the midwife who made it happen. Our artist, Carlos Ezquerra, to whom we gave the scripts, came up with this character who was well beyond either John's conception or mine. We largely capitalized on that. I

Design & Layout: Luis Ramos

Judge Dredd roars to life on movie screens this summer, with action hero Sylvester Stallone starring as Judge, jury and executioner.

saw things that Carlos was drawing and I thought, 'Hang on a minute, let's forget our original idea—let's take this much, much further,' and that's really what happened."

Besides helping Wagner shape and develop *Judge Dredd*, Mills also created *2000 A.D.*, where the strip premiered. "I was the creator and first editor of *2000 A.D.*," he explains. "What I wanted to do was start the thing, make it a success and then run away before it became a grind, while I was still having fun! Editing a comic on a year-in, year-out basis is *not* fun. Creating a comic is a *lot* of fun, and I still look back with great affection on those early days."

All Movie Photos: Courtesy The Walt Disney Company

The early days of *Dredd* and *2000 A.D.* saw Mills trying to avoid editorial meddling from the board of directors at Fleetway Comics. "We went through boardroom hell!" laughs Mills. "They really tried their best to stop the comic from functioning as well as it needed to, and we used all kinds of devices to get things through. For instance, when somebody got their arms or legs blown off, we would say, 'It's OK! He's a robot!' or 'He's a cyborg!' Eventually, they got wise, and we weren't able to have the arms and legs blown off cyborgs, so we had to find some other device so we could get away with things."

"The robot in the film looks amazing, and the robot is one of my characters as well," says *Dredd* writer/editor Pat Mills.

Wagner's initial concept of Dredd got a thumbs-down due to its violent content, but there was plenty left that appealed to the duo. "John had the idea of a cop for whom any crime, no matter how small, was punishable by death," Mills says. "At the day's end, I couldn't get that through the Board of Directors of Fleetway. That actually had to go. But, the grimness, the unrelenting, menacing super-cop quality was basically what John was exuding."

Mills actually came up with the "Judge Dredd" name for an entirely different tale, but both he and Wagner discovered it was perfect for their Judge. "I had a completely different story," says Mills. "I had a Peter Cushing-type character, an elderly occult magician called Judge Dredd. He was Britain's last hanging judge—a very manic character. As *2000 A.D.* became more and more science fiction and less and less occult, the story didn't seem as appropriate as it did when I wrote it. So, John said, 'If you're not going to use that story, would you mind if I have the name Judge Dredd for this cop?' And I said sure.

"Once the guy was called Judge Dredd, it raised all kinds of questions, like *why* was he a judge? What sort of judge? He was obviously judge, jury *and* executioner, but both of us knew there had to be a backstory behind it. Progressively, that was developed, but as I say, that initial, sardonic nastiness that *is Judge Dredd* was very much something that John brought to it, and which I fanned to life as the comic evolved, in particular with Carlos' visuals. It was a combination of all three of us seeing this marvelously sinister character who could really scare the living daylights out of the readers—that was our intention, anyway."

Mills admits to a bit of personal satisfaction in unleashing the over-the-top, ultra-violent lawman on readers, because they had always rejected his sympathetic comics creations. "For me, there was an element of revenge there, because I personally like human characters; I like vulnerability," he explains. "I like humanity in characters. I found that of my stories and the stories I was getting produced, every single story that was tough and unrelenting was selling very well, and every story that was showing vulnerability was doing very badly. I felt very cheated on that, so to me, *Judge Dredd* was my revenge on the readers! 'You want misery? OK, kids, here's Judge Dredd!' "

Judge Dredd is a character who's almost archetypal, says Mills, which is one reason he has stood the test of time. "The way he's drawn is visually superb. The costume, the menace in the way he looks taps into a universal archetype, which is the black,

All Movie Photos: Richard Blanshard/Copyright 1995 Cinergi Pictures Entertainment & Cinergi Productions N.V. Inc.

Satanic character, the hero from the dark side. Whether it's Batman, Zorro or Marshall Law, they're all really from the same generic root. It's the dark hero/villain that we have to acknowledge. We all have that character in our soul somewhere, and Judge Dredd is perhaps one of the best visual extrapolations of it. Carlos created that very strongly.

"Secondly, it has a great deal of John Wagner's Scottish dourness, a lot of that grim, Presbyterian character that the Scots have whether they're religious or not, almost enjoying the misery of life. Dredd obviously enjoys that. That sardonic humor is reflected in John himself. Thirdly, it's a very well-thought-through universe—we did a lot of work!"

An enormous amount of work did go into that initial *Judge Dredd* tale, with several writers trying their hand. "John wrote two or three drafts of the first *Judge Dredd* story and I wrote three first episodes—and I rejected them all," Mills explains. "I ended up with a hybrid version of about two other writers' stories combined together. I knew I wanted something really special, and I firmly believe that if you don't get it right on the first episode, then you pay for it year after year. You *have* to get the first episode right. It's almost a psychic thing—it sends out a shock to the readers that carries out through the years. I would go so far as to say that if the first *Batman* was wrong, *Batman* wouldn't be around today.

"There were around five different versions of episode one of *Judge Dredd*, and it was only when I got to the fifth version—which wasn't mine and wasn't John's at all, because we worked under a 'house system' of writing in those days—that we came up with a definitive one. To this day, I think that original episode stands up very well. In no way is it dated. I'm very pleased with that, and it made all of those different versions worthwhile."

Each of the original five attempts at *Judge Dredd* was lacking in some important way, notes the writer/editor. "John had decided to go for a very savage approach, and for some reason, he then changed his mind and went political. It wasn't what I was expecting at all. I felt he had moved away from the original attraction, and so I wrote a version that was very savage—I had Judge Dredd rescue a villain from an inferno simply so that he could shoot him legally! That version was considered too violent by the Fleetway board.

Dredd was created in the late '70s by writer John Wagner, artist Carlos Ezquerra and editor Mills for England's *2000 A.D.* comic.

"A subsequent version, where he was shooting jaywalkers—they just said, 'No way!' This was going back to John's original concept. John had told me, 'I want Judge Dredd to shoot people for dropping litter or jaywalking,' and I said it was brilliant. At that time, *Death Race 2000* was out, and we were very influenced by the ludicrous nature of that kind of science fiction. But that all went right out the window.

"I then decided to do a straightforward science fiction kind of *Blade Runner* story about a villain who'd had his face changed. He passes Judge Dredd and sneers at him, but Dredd knows he's a villain because he recognizes his voice-print. But, it seemed to me that the villain wasn't nasty enough."

Other writers were eventually brought into play to expand the concepts even further. "I had been sending this story out to different writers, and one came back with the idea of these mutants hanging out in the Empire State Building," says Mills. "There was a road running through the Empire State Building, and there were actually buildings above it. In other words, this city was now four miles high, and I thought it had a kind of 'Wow!' quality.

"Then, one of my office assistants mentioned a science fiction story about people being marooned on a traffic island, and I thought it was the perfect answer to what the Judges do to people they don't like—they leave them on a traffic island in the middle of nowhere as a cruel punishment and a warning to others. There were other things that were unique to it, like the Judge's bikes, which could drive home without their riders. If a Judge fell in the course of battle, his bike would take him home. So, it had the romance of the Judges, it had the science fiction scale, and it had the humorous but nasty black comedy of the punishment of the Judges. It had everything, but it took us five drafts to get to a version that was still nasty, but wasn't going to cause the board of directors to throw it out."

Art: Brian Bolland

Mills stood firm on one element that became essential to the *Judge Dredd* mythos, the Mega-City concept. "At one stage, they said to me, 'You can't have this story in New York, it's far too extreme. But we saw a movie recently, and maybe this'll help—how about if you set it in a galaxy far, far away?' I said, 'No!—it's going to be in New York!' And that's the one thing I would *not* budge on. I said we would tone it down

Selected Art: Copyright 1988 Fleetway Publications
Selected Art: Copyright 1987, 1982, 1965. IPC Magazines Ltd.

"The way he's drawn is visually superb. The costume, the menace in the way he looks taps into a universal archetype," Mills contends.

and drop the jaywalkers and litterbugs. We would drop the scenes where he shoots people after he has rescued them from a fire, but it *has* to be New York, albeit a futuristic New York, a Mega-City. The reader had to get the feeling that this is a future that's lurking around the corner somewhere, and might just bite them in the ankle!"

The *Judge Dredd* title and Mega-City are two of Mills' most important contributions to the mythos. "I came up with some formative elements and the historical background of the Judges, which I explored in subsequent stories," he says. "I wrote a story where we saw how American democracy failed, and the people were being complete assholes. They were protesting at the White House and saying, 'All power to the Judges!' and so the Judges seize power! I have the last President of the United States kept in suspended animation in Fort Knox.

"The most important things I brought to *Judge Dredd* were probably the mythos, the infrastructure, the world of the Judges and that world's geography. The essential character comes from John, the essential visuals come from Carlos, and a large proportion of the world probably comes from me, like the Cursed Earth, the nuclear desert lurking outside Mega-City where you can have all kinds of freaks just waiting to come in and give everybody some trouble!"

One of the all-time classic *Judge Dredd* tales, titled "The Cursed Earth," was written by Mills. " 'The Cursed Earth' has always been a strange one, because there has always been a split in the character of Dredd," notes Mills. "It comes down to my resentment of the readers' wanting this grim character that John Wagner was more than happy to do, because it is very much John. If you ever meet John, you think, 'My God, he *is* Judge Dredd'—because he is! He talks one word every 10 seconds, whereas I talk 100 words a second. So, when they asked me to write 'The Cursed Earth,' I thought, 'I can't write Dredd this way.'

"In those days, the character was still sufficiently fluid so I could really write him any way that I wanted. I brought out things that I resented the readers for blocking me on with other stories. I brought out heroism and vulnerability. There's a scene where he apologizes to an alien for what human beings have done. To me, those qualities were important.

"Some people would say, and quite rightly, that there's a difference between that Dredd and the Dredd that generally confronts the reader. My answer to that would be that it's a bit like all of us. One minute we can be a loving parent, the next minute, a computer programmer, the next minute we can be an evil boss at work. We can be more than one person. If all of us can have more than one personality, I don't see why Judge Dredd can't. In other words, perhaps in this adventure on 'The Cursed Earth,' he was able to let go a little bit, and show some of the humanity that he hadn't been able to show in other stories. That has always been an obsession of mine.

"It's potentially a weakness of Judge Dredd that he is so rigid, and I think only a writer like John can make it work. When some of the other writers do it, they can't be John, because John has that grim character and he can make it work in his own sardonic way. It's like someone who *isn't* Clint Eastwood trying to be Clint Eastwood. They won't make it work. If you try and be something you're not, it won't work."

HE'S DEAD! YOU JUST SAVED MEGA-CITY ONE, DREDD. NOW— WILL YOU SAVE MEGA-CITY TWO?
WHEN THOUSANDS COULD TURN INTO CRAZY MONSTERS LIKE RED...? THERE'S NO REFUSING!
I ONE HIM! ... GROW ME AN WHEELS... I WANT TO GET MOVING ... FAST!
SOMEHOW I'M GONNA MAKE IT — ACROSS THE CURSED EARTH!
DREDD
Next Prog: INTO THE DARKNESS!

"When they asked me to write 'The Cursed Earth,' I thought, 'I can't write Dredd this way,' " notes Mills, who balked at the hero's totally grim nature.

Art: Mike McMahon

His difficulty in writing a grim and gritty Dredd led Mills to create a character for a tale that is having an impact on the *Judge Dredd* film. "I had that same problem on a story which is largely used in the movie," he says. "They asked me to write a one-shot story, so I created Rico, the film's main villain. Again, I was faced with the problem of what to do with Judge Dredd. He's not me. I can't relate to this guy, because he's too miserable for me—not my kind of character. So, what I did was create Rico, who is Judge Dredd's twin. It's the archetypal thing in psychology that if one person tries to be too good and too holy, then what he's denying in himself will be projected on his brother, sister or

Art: Brian Bolland

twin. And that's what Rico is—he's Judge Dredd's darker self. He's the corrupt cop, he's the character who says, 'Screw 'em all, let's have some fun!' It's a human myth, really; it's the dark side of our character.

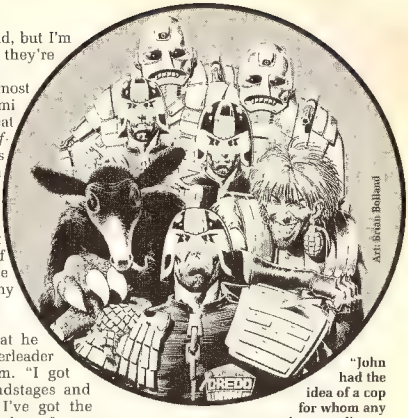
"That has always been the attack side for me. I have to explore those characteristics. I can't write Judge Dredd in that rigid way, but I think when it's done well, particularly by John or Alan Grant, it works very well, because that's the way they are! They have no problem being Judge Dredd."

Mills knew that "The Cursed Earth" had the potential to be a hit when they created it, simply because of the talent involved. "I had been starved of good artists for a while, and they had given me two damned good artists on this, Mike McMahon and Brian Bolland," Mills explains. "So, I knew I had an opportunity to do something good. I had been awash with ideas that I hadn't been able to work in anywhere else. I knew that Judge Dredd needed to get out of the Mega-Cities and do something different. For me, it was a great opportunity to explore some of the non-urban SF fantasies—the tyrannosaurs, the raging beast waiting outside the city, the hillbillies, etc. I prefer to really be let off the leash when I write, to have the editor say, 'You can do what you like, just go for it!'

"Nowadays it would be *much* harder to do something like 'The Cursed Earth,' because there are 15 or 16 years of backstories, which restrict you. Imagine what it must be like writing *Spider-Man* these days! It's more like homage rather than free-wheeling. You think, 'This character is a part of American popular culture.' It's a little chilling—I wouldn't know what to do with it!"

Although Mills isn't directly involved with the *Judge Dredd* movie, several of his concepts play villainous key roles in the big-budget flick. "Rico is the main villain," says Mills. "Rico has a robot sidekick who's brilliant. The robot in the film looks *amazing*, and the robot is one of my characters, as well! They just refer to him in the film as the War Robot, but he's actually a character called Hammerstein from *another 2000 A.D.* story called 'The ABC Warriors.' It depends on what they do with it, but that robot has the potential to steal the show—he certainly does when I go down to the soundstages! It may not be appropriate to have some incredible Terminator robot almost catching your eye instead of Judge Dredd, but I'm sure they know what they're doing.

"For my money, he's almost in the same league as Terminator or any other great movie robot. He's a *magnificent* robot, and that's largely thanks to Kevin O'Neill's design. Kevin designed that character many years ago, and it's a tribute to his classic art that it stood the test of time, and that they chose that design rather than any other to go in the movie!"



"John had the idea of a cop for whom any crime, no matter how small, was punishable by death," reveals Mills of the original conception for Judge Dredd.

Mills confesses that he has become a cheerleader for the new film. "I got taken down to the soundstages and shown around the set. I've got the script, which I haven't read yet. It was not my principal character, it was a character I was involved with, so I was neither carrying a torch for it or against it. I went down there with a neutral mind and wishing it well, but not particularly passionate about it one way or the other. My interest had been acknowledged and I was getting paid for that bit, so there was no problem.

"When I got there, I was totally and utterly converted to it. I was *so* impressed! It seemed to me that they had gotten *everything* right. There was so much love and care in the visuals. The only compromise I could see was that Stallone wasn't going to wear the helmet the entire time. We would see his face, and it seems perfectly reasonable and appropriate that we should. After all, if you're paying a Hollywood star millions of dollars to appear, you want to see him! Apart from that, I don't really recall any other major compromise. The streets of Mega-City were brilliantly conceived. For my money, they're better than *Blade Runner*, and I was a big fan of *Blade Runner*. The science fiction city there was incredible, but Mega-City is amazing! It's dirty and futuristic.

The right honorable Judge Dredd "presides" over another of Mega-City's wretched perps.

Russian Judge Molotov learns a little lesson, Dredd style, about interfacing with law enforcement officials from other jurisdictions.

"The comic book had come to life in every respect. The uniforms are fabulous very sinister. They decided to do that thing which Hollywood normally doesn't bother

doing—they went back to the roots and actually looked at the comic and said, 'OK, *this* is why it was popular in the first place.' I think what sometimes happens is that it's ignored—'Never mind what the comic said, we're making it into a film now.' "

According to Mills, Stallone is a good choice for Dredd. "I had always seen it being that kind of character, whether it was him, Jean-Claude Van Damme, some kind of younger Clint Eastwood or whatever," he says. "It seemed to me that the *only* other one could have been Arnold Schwarzenegger, really, though Dredd was never as bulky as Schwarzenegger. I suppose if one wanted to be purist about it, Stallone *isn't* as tall as Dredd is, but with judicious filming, I'm sure that will be resolved.

"While we were on the set, we heard him come up with one kind of classic line: 'You creeps are all under arrest.' He said it in that marvelous Stallone accent. It was just perfect. We thought, 'This guy really *is* Judge Dredd.' Absolutely amazing!"

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Art: Mike McMahon

According to Mills, the movie sets will faithfully reproduce the look and feel of the sprawling Mega-Cities from the comics.

Mills, who's writing a comic-book return for Rico, expects an on-screen credit for his part in developing the *Judge Dredd* mythos. "I've been told that I'll be down there, above the hairdresser and the boom operator," he laughs. "I've exerted as much pressure on the publishers as I can, and they've told me that I receive credit as the creator of Rico, Hammerstein and so on. That will have to do, and I'm happy enough if that goes down. I shall be a bit pissed off if it's missing, but life is too short to get epileptic about it. But we shall see—I'm sure I'll be down in the micro-print somewhere where you'll need binoculars to read it!"

Recently, DC Comics launched two ongoing *Judge Dredd* titles in America, but Mills confesses he hasn't read either of them. "I've heard mixed stories about them. I haven't seen them, because to be honest, I *did not* want to get drawn into it in terms of giving an opinion. I'm told—and bear in mind, this is a British perspective, and from an American public's point-of-view, it may be perfect, but I know there are British fans and pros who feel that—it hasn't got the essential Dredd quality. In a way, that has me nervous about looking at it, in case I feel they're right. As long as I haven't looked at it, I don't have to take sides in the debate. I can say, 'Well, you might be right!' or 'They might be right!' I gather it isn't doing phenomenally well, but I'm sure sales will go up when the movie is released.

Mills is purposefully staying out of the debate on the merits of the American version of *Dredd*, produced by DC Comics.

Art: Anthony Williams, Andy Lanning/Trademark & (Copyright 1995 Fleetmont Foundation

"When we try and do another person's culture, it doesn't work that well. With some things, you must take recognition of the background culture. I mean, in Britain, we *revel* in being miserable and nasty, but America is more generally regarded as the land of opportunity, and the 'Have a Nice Day' thing. It must be very hard for people who've been brought up in that culture to write about this nasty cop who would hit you in the face if you said, 'Have a nice day!' "

The original *Judge Dredd* comic was filled with satirical and humorous elements, though the movie will probably de-emphasize those aspects of *Dredd*. "I suspect that the movie won't have as large a proportion of those satirical undercurrents as the fans would like," Mills predicts. "I'm only guessing, but since Dirty Harry managed to get the odd bit of humor in, I would hope that the *Dredd* film does the same. It would be a shame if that was missing, but I don't think it would be a mortal blow, because there's so much else in *Dredd* that's good. They have Rico, and he's not particularly funny, but they also have the Angel Gang, and I would think that probably has some humor in it. Of course, much of the humor of *Dredd* was very episodic. It's almost like a three-picture gag, and to translate that to the movie screen *does* need some pretty nifty footwork. Sometimes it's not possible to do everything unless you have a team of writers, but if you have a team of writers, it can look as if it's written by committee. So, you can't win!"

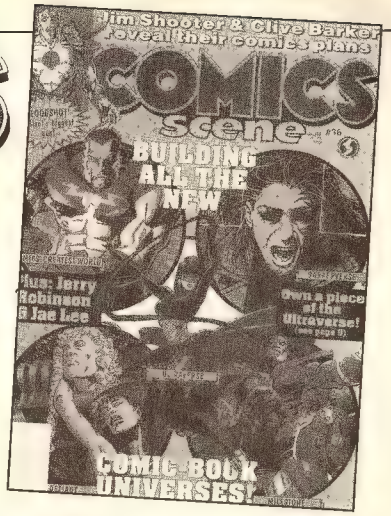
Comedy is, of course, not always appreciated in comic book writing. "American publishers are wary of humor," says Mills. "I've had this problem with Marvel, where Tony Skinner and I have done *Punisher 2099*. Every so often, we've slipped some humor in, and sometimes they let us get away with it, but invariably they'll say, 'It's a little too humorous,' or 'This is a little too ridiculous.' We've had to go back to that straight, poker-faced style, which *isn't* really us."

An ironic footnote for Mills involves producer Roger Corman's film *Death Race 2000*. Mills, with writing partner Skinner, is scripting the comic book sequel (CS #50) to that cult film (directed by Paul Bartel), which actually provided some inspiration during *Dredd*'s creation.

"Frankenstein, from *Death Race 2000*, was one of the prime references I sent to Carlos Ezquerra for Judge

(continued on page 62)

COMICS Scene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WORD BALLOONS

Vertically-Integrated Fun

Hi. They say that back in the "good old days" of comics, Jack "King" Kirby could pencil about 142 full pages per day. I swear, this is *not* an exaggeration. He was a busy guy.

The Jack Kirby of the magazine world is indisputably COMICS SCENE's own editor, Dave McDonnell. Like the King nonchalantly drawing dozens of breathtaking stories every month, Dave almost single-handedly brings to eager readers all the latest info about the fun stuff in life—comics, cartoons, SF and fantasy movies and TV, etc.—in the pages of COMICS SCENE, STARLOG, STARLOG SCIENCE FICTION EXPLORER and a host of other titles, over 142 full-length magazines each month.

I swear, this is *not* an exaggeration. He is a busy guy.

Clearly, even Dave needs a break every now and then. To this end, he has passed on the responsibility for writing the Word Balloons column to me. In comic-book terms, it's sort of like Galactus bestowing a small amount of his cosmic power on one of his heralds, that he might be saved some of the leg work involved in being the supreme being in the universe. So, thus empowered, here I go.

As one of those literary writers must have meant to say, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times for the comics industry." Remember that book? Anyway, the comics business is going through another severe downturn, the bubble having finally burst on the enormous growth spurt of the last few years. At the same time, comics have never had a higher profile in the mainstream media. Whether this means that comics as a medium have grown up, or that the mainstream has lowered its collective brow and embraced all things cartoonish, is open to debate. Only Jim Carrey knows for sure.

The result of this situation is that comics as a creative medium are under siege, while comics as a product are finally taking their place in the marketplace of mass consumption. As veteran writer Chris Claremont notes elsewhere in this issue, "The routes to profit and success [are] the maximization of a distribution network, the gathering in of and absolute control over all aspects of production, licensing and now marketing, so that the exploitation process of a character is fully, vertically-integrated from top to bottom, and the company can derive the maximum return on its investment."

This strategy only benefits you the comics consumer as long as you like the product. If you love the Power Men, then you'll love the Power Men Underoos and squirt bottles and CD-ROMs and feature films and, oh yeah, comic books. But if you're looking for something else, a product *not* created for the efficiency with which it can be marketed, something that doesn't appeal to the widest possible group of paying customers, then your choices may be somewhat limited.

Which brings us to *The Tick*, a success story which proves that exploiting a comics property need not be such a bad thing. Based on the comic series created by Ben Edlund and published by New England Comics, *The Tick* animated series airs on Saturday mornings, sandwiched between Marvel mainstays *Spider-Man* and *X-Men*. What makes *The Tick* stand apart is that Edlund has retained control of his characters. His show has made an almost seamless transformation to the new medium and reflects the same delightfully warped and dopey sense of humor that the comics did.

Where else can you see villains like Chairface Chippendale, whose nefarious master plan is to carve his name into the moon with a huge laser? Or a super-genius kid who replaces his skull with a glass dome so he can show off his brain? Or a walking humanoid pat of butter? What other superhero is such an idiot, yet so very likable, and has no real powers to speak of other than that he is "mighty"? Watch the show, you'll see what I mean.

Our big blue friend The Tick has retained an improbable degree of individuality on his trip from black-and-white comic book to successful cartoon show and toy line. Let's pray that sort of thing can continue to happen. Hopefully, as comics companies become more adept at filling all levels of the marketplace with their products, they won't lose what was fun about them in the first place, and they won't crowd out cool guys like The Tick.

—Michael Stewart/Managing Editor

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Don Heck

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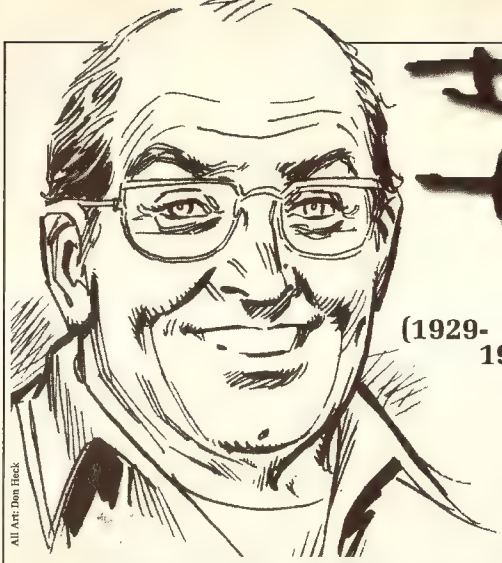


All Art: Don Heck

I always wanted to be a cartoonist. But I wanted to be a newspaper comic-strip artist like Milton Caniff, as people in those days did. I was always a great admirer of Caniff. Burma and the Dragon Lady were my favorites."

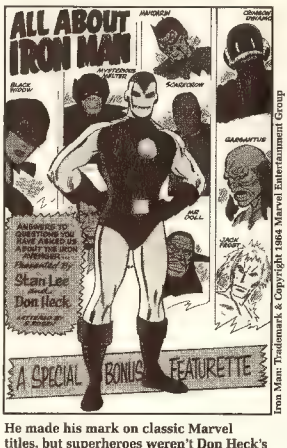
Instead, Don Heck became a comic-book artist. Born January 2, 1929, he had the misfortune to enter the field in the early 1950s, when sales and content were under assault during the horror boom. Heck did his share of horror stories at the start, but with the advent of the Comics Code, he gravitated to the war, Western and fantasy genres, working principally for Marvel Comics. Those were rough times for the industry—rates were low and the future uncertain—but Heck found the work fulfilling.

He might have remained an obscure but content contributor to titles like *Tales of Suspense*, but Stan Lee and Jack Kirby returned to superheroes with a vengeance in the early '60s. Soon, Heck was drafted to continue many Lee-Kirby features when the team moved on, including *The Avengers*, *X-Men*, *Ant-Man* and *Thor*. Iron Man—a character that Kirby designed—was actually launched by Lee and Heck, who conceived everything but the original armor design.

Through the '60s, Heck (who discussed his career in CS #37-#38) toiled in the Marvel Universe, only occasionally creating a new character like Wonder Man or Hawkeye. Plagued by what he felt was a series of inferior inkers, he moved over to DC Comics, which put him to work on *Wonder Woman*, *Justice League of America* and other titles, work he considered more and more of a chore as the years rolled on.

Eventually, Heck returned to Marvel, where he was reduced to doing fill-in issues, often featuring Iron Man and Hawkeye, as his unique, modernistic style fell more and more out of favor with editors.

"You take a shot," he recalled. "If it doesn't work, you go back to the other one. It's the only way you can work it sometimes."



Iron Man: Trademark & Copyright 1964 Marvel Entertainment Group

He made his mark on classic Marvel titles, but superheroes weren't Don Heck's favorites. "I always like regular stories: people as people," he said.

Heck himself was professionally sanguine about his declining reputation—a situation aggravated when *The Comics Journal* misquoted Harlan Ellison as calling him the worst artist in comics.

"You do the best you can," Heck once said. "Usually, there's no sense in getting bothered with it. All you can do is the best you know how with the pencils. If [the inkers] screw it up, there's not a damn thing you can do."

With characteristic wry humor, Heck often recounted the typical editorial line: " 'Don't worry. I've got just the guy. He's going to be good.' " To which Heck would reply, "What do you mean, *'going* to be?' "

Nor was he enamored of the new breed of writers, whose plots he was burdened with realizing into fully developed layouts. "If their TV sets go off," he observed, "they're out of business. There's no characterization. They don't build a story. 'It's like writing a movie plot: We'll wing it.' You *don't* wing it.

"Robert Loren Fleming gave me a nice compliment once," Heck added. " 'You're one of the few that when I tell you to put something in the story, you actually put it down. You follow what I'm writing, rather than just put any damn thing you feel like.' "

While others created new characters, only to lose them to other, fresher talents, Heck, knowing he would never own his own creations, was content to be a kind of utility man, continuing existing characters.

"I was never that keen on superheroes anyway," he admitted. "I always like regular stories: people as people. I hope eventually comics will expand in a different area. It would be nice for a change."

Regrettably, Don Heck never lived to see that long-overdue transformation. In recent years, a series of health setbacks proved but a prelude to a more serious condition. On February 23, one of the brightest early stars in the Marvel Universe succumbed to lung cancer at age 66, his talents forever lost to an industry that had taken him for granted.

—Will Murray

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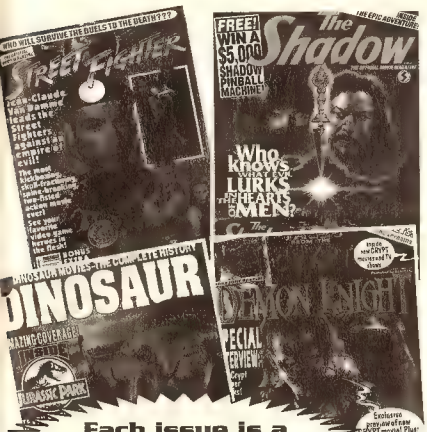
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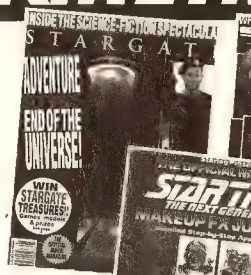
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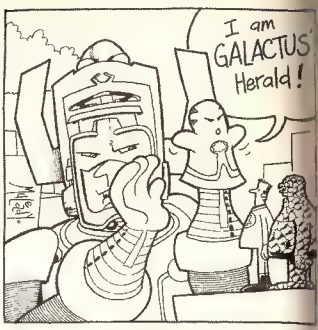

"EVEN GALACTUS IS DOWNSIZING!"

Art: Bob Mulready

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COMICS SCENE
475 Park Avenue So., 8th Flr.
New York, NY 10016

...In Animation Scene (#49), you credited me with animating the mouth of the talking cat Brax in the movie *Hocus Pocus*. The phrasing brought to mind images of those old films of animals where they're made to talk by hand-animating their mouths.

For *Hocus Pocus*, I worked with Rhythm & Hues computer graphics and supervised the animation of a 3 D. digital cat's head, which was blended into the footage of the real cat's body (minus his original head). We did this for his talking scenes, as well as a handful of non talking ones. Not exactly as powerful as *Jurassic Park*, but certainly more effective than cartoon mouths pasted over a real cat.

In Mickey Mouse's new cartoon, "Runaway Brain," the monster's name is Julius. While he does resemble Peg Leg Pete, I chose not to call him that since his character is completely different and he's about five times larger than the real Pete. Based on the number of different incarnations of Goofy-type characters in Disney cartoons, I thought this made the most sense and would be less confusing. It also seemed funnier for this huge guy to have the name Julius.

I couldn't agree more with David McDonnell's editorial on superhero origin stories and the movies. As a teenager, I remember having wished the first *Superman* movie began with his appearance and skipped the boring Krypton stuff. With his origin out of the way in the first movie, I had high hopes for the sequels, but they just got campier and campier.

Most of the movies featuring comic-book heroes would have made mediocre comics at best. The action seems scaled down and the dynamics of the comics are lost. Superman doesn't fly, he floats. When somebody gets hit across the room, they float too! Where's the power in that? Unfortunately, real people in lycra bodysuits don't help. Far from looking tough, they look soft and vulnerable—the exceptions being the Batman and Catwoman costumes in *Batman Returns* (if only he could move his neck!).

Chris Bailey, Director
"Runaway Brain"
Disney Feature Animation

Art: Bob Mulready

...Bravo to Michael Keaton (CS#49) for choosing against another go round as Batman. When an actor becomes closely identified with a movie character, it's hard for the public to understand why he would not want to continue to do so. But typecasting can be career suicide. Perhaps Keaton was thinking of another talented Bat actor who will be forever seen as the Caped Crusader whether he likes it or not.

I have long admired Keaton's acting talents. When I first saw promotional stills of Keaton in full Batman regalia, I could hardly believe this was the same man who played the goofy house husband in *Mr. Mom* or the over-the-top and out-of-control ghoul in *Beetlejuice*. To see him shackled into one role, no matter how good he was in it, would be a missed opportunity for his fans as well as him. Keaton has a wide range of talent, and half the fun of his movies lies in seeing what character he'll create next.

While I'm not familiar with his previous work, I look forward to Val Kilmer's interpretation of Batman. As someone in the pages of *Comic Buyer's Guide* wisely observed, it'll be very much like comparing the artistic interpretations of the Dark Knight in his comic books. Bob Kane, Frank Miller, Neal Adams and Carmine Infantino all drew *very* different styles of the character; they were all great interpretations, in their own way. Kilmer should *not* be compared to Keaton, but judged on his own interpretation.

On the subject of Batman, I recently finished *Back to the Batcave* by Adam West. Pick this up if you haven't already! In addition to the ample supply of Batman stories, he also tells a few hilarious anecdotes of his days as a beginning studio actor. If you're one of those people who curse the *Batman* TV show as the nadir of all comics history and see Adam West as the devil incarnate for doing the show, I have two suggestions: (1) Get a life, it was just a TV show, and (2) Put aside your prejudices and read the book. You'll enjoy it.

Michal Jacot
1045 N US-23
East Tawas, MI 48730

...This is just my open letter of thanks for your coverage of the *Spider-Man* TV series. After reading a badly done rival magazine's cover story on the *Spider-Man* TV series which told me nothing about the show, I really appreciated COMICS SCENE's inside scoop (CS #48).

Unlike that other magazine, you guys actually told what the show was about. I'm glad they're using Kraven the Hunter. I wonder if they're going to do an episode based on *Maximum Carnage*.

I agree 100 percent with Mitchell Sapp's suggestion in COMICS SCENE #48 to have a COMICS SCREEN magazine. It could cover things like *The Shadow* and TV shows like *X-Men* and *Spider-Man*. Pat Jankiewicz's stories on *Batman* and *X-Men* are what attracted me to COMICS SCENE and his article on *Spider-Man* pulled me back.

I am not a comic book reader full time, but I do love comic book movies and TV shows. When you do stories on *The Mask*, I love it, but something like *Generation X* is just not interesting. So if you do COMICS SCREEN, do more cartoon articles. How about a piece on *The Jetsons*, *Space Ghost* or *The Herculoids*?

Brian L. Kyler
Address Withheld

...With all this talk about Micky Dolenz as the Riddler, why doesn't some filmmaker give the poor guy a chance to prove himself a competent actor/bankable star and cast him in the title role of a big-budget, live-action remake of his old cartoon series *The Funky Phantom*. Now, *that's* a role Micky is perfect for!

I also want to encourage the Warner Bros. network to look to DC superheroes for television material. Face it—UPN is SF, FOX is Generation X, CBS is senior citizens, ABC is kids and teens, NBC is...the network for people too stupid to know how to change the channel, so the WBN might as well be superheroes!

Finally, I also support a COMICS SCREEN magazine. Of course, I would probably stop buying COMICS SCENE then, so perhaps instead you could do two issues of CS as SCREEN SPECIALS per year.

Denny Mahibar
Dearborn, MI

It's a good idea—and we've

more or less made this issue a sample issue of COMICS SCREEN

...I'm a longtime reader and first-time writer to COMICS SCENE. I absolutely love Lee Solomon's idea for the WB Network. If any executives are reading CS, I wholeheartedly encourage them to produce such a franchise. And do crossovers between the series—they could do a *Justice League* TV movie with the characters once or twice a season. But they may have to replace the *Batman* series with a *Green Lantern Green Arrow* series, because I saw the *Batman Forever* trailer, and that movie is going to be *huge*! Val Kilmer will make everyone forget Michael Keaton. Nicole Kidman looks stunning. Chris O'Donnell is the definitive Robin. Tommy Lee Jones seems a little Jokerish, though still great. But the scenes with Jim Carrey—they look like they were written for Micky Dolenz! I swear, I could picture Dolenz in that role so easily! Carrey is playing the role *very* Dolenzesque. He'll be a superb Riddler, but Dolenz would have been perfect.

Finally, in Adam West's book, *Back to the Batcave*, he mentions that ABC and DC originally intended the TV show to be a serious, yet fun and hip *Man From U.N.C.L.E.*-esque adventure show starring Mike Henry (a football player and movie Tarzan) as Batman. In fact, DC authorized publicity photos of Henry as Batman.

I beg of you to *please* do some investigating and detective work to shed some light on this mystery of the lost *Batman* series. Find and publish those Mike Henry photos and any details on the series and story lines you can locate—please write an article, just as you did for the lost William Dozier *Dick Tracy* pilot a few years ago!

Thank you and keep up the great work on CS.

Tina Baffo
Address Withheld

..As he has been the focus of several Lettering installments of late, I think it would be interesting and intriguing to publish an interview with Micky Dolenz. You could ask him about doing voices for *The Tick* and all the Hanna Barbera cartoons he voiced in the '70s and '80s. You could bring up the subject of the Riddler in *Batman Forever*, get his views and feelings on the Monkees comic books published in the '60s and ask him about the reports of Sam Raimi and Quentin Tarantino expressing interest in doing a live action *Funky Phantom* film with him, or the rumors of *Airplane* producers Jim Abrahams and Jerry and David Zucker making a *Monkees* movie with the four original stars. Please conduct it for an upcoming issue!

Karen Rienecke
Traverse City, MI

...The interview with Neil Gaiman (CS #49) was wonderful! I have been trying to get my hands on everything he has ever done in the comic biz, *The Books of Magic*—everything! I never knew he did a *Spawn* comic. The irony of the matter is that I read your article right after a friend introduced me to the extremely long-caped character. I would enjoy hearing from other Lord Shaper fans and as Tori Amos said, I hope "me and Neil will be hanging out with the Dream King," in our dreams at best

Neil is perfectly correct about not letting the siblings live on except in our hearts, our minds and our back issues. And while I still hate to see them go, I think ending it all will make it all hit a little closer to home. So if there is a tear in your hand, give it to Despair, tell Delirium where her doggy is, let Destiny close the book and Death will lock the door behind her when she leaves. Goodbye, Morpheus! We'll miss you!

Jennifer Luneke
6474 143rd Street N
PBG, FL 33418

...Well, my worst fears are finally being realized. I've been very vocal in the past about one of my fears, and I've jokingly mentioned my second fear, not really believing that it would happen. So you'll know what I'm talking about, let me just jump right into my two fears and tell you about them.

My first fear has always been that comics would someday increase in price to such a level that I would have had to give them up. And it looks like my fear is quickly being realized with this current price hike. In the past, one could always expect a five-cent or even 10 cent increase every so often, but now you can expect prices to increase at a rate of 20 cents to 55 cents every year, and that's outrageous.

Art: Bob Muleady

What's even more outrageous is that most of the time, such an increase is unnecessary. What we end up paying for is the paper, as the product inside isn't as good as it should be. It seems the only thing we can be sure of is that the paper will be the best, at least according to the industry. But at the prices we're paying, we should be able to expect a lot more. However, the comics don't need to be printed on such expensive paper to make them more enjoyable. I enjoy my comics from the early days as much as, if not more than, anything published since the advent of the better paper. Can anyone better than much of the stuff to come out of the late '70s and '80s? I don't think so. Some of the most memorable stories were published on regular newsprint, and their values are still going up.

And if that isn't enough, this new breed of paper isn't without faults. It's so glossy that if your light isn't angled just right, all you see is a bright glare. It can be aggravating at times. It sounds like a petty thing, but it isn't just my imagination either. Erik Larsen, in the letters pages

Art: Bob Muleady

HE-MAN AND THE MUSTARDS OF THE UNIVERSE.

out there really say that any of the stuff out there today is bet-

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of *Freak Force 5*, mentions that the paper that had first been used for the title, apparently the same paper used by many of Image's creators, had a "pesky glare." And he changed paper. It didn't lower the book's price; in fact, the price quickly rose from $1.95 to $2.50 (which puts Image high on my "dump if you have to" list, but at least someone noticed that the paper was less than perfect).

Which brings me to my second fear, one that I just recently developed. With this new paper, it's getting harder and harder to tell when the cover ends and the story begins. The papers are so similar, if not the same, that they have exactly the same look and feel. And with the way panels are getting larger and larger, I won't be the least bit surprised if single-panel comics soon become the *rule* instead of the exception.

Basically, what it comes down to is that I seem to be

GEEK #1 BOUGHT BY NERD #1.

Art: Bob Muleady

dropping many more titles during a year's time than I'm adding, but the amount of money I'm spending is increasing. Just recently I was filling out my order form from my subscription service, without which I would not be reading half of the books I currently am, and the total was larger than it has been in a long time, but at the same time my order was smaller because I had dropped a few books.

I'm willing to pay a little extra for a more obscure book, but I don't think that I should have to pay an arm and a leg for *every* book I want. I fear that not only will the industry force me out by raising prices too high, but they may also force themselves out of business. Regardless of what they might think, I'm sure that many fans don't have a large amount of disposable income to spend on comics, and each time a fan has to stop buying comics because of the price, can the industry really be sure that some new reader will take his place? I remember that I was able to start reading comics because it was a *cheap* form of entertainment that also taught a person how to read better and appreciate art. As prices continue to go up, fewer and fewer people will feel the inclination to try something that is still considered "kids' stuff."

So, the industry had better take heed.

Derrick Fannin
594 Hyden Br.
Van Lear, KY 41265

We must also point out that prices of all comics and magazines are likely to continue to increase. The price of all paper—not just the nifty stuff, but newsprint and all kinds—as well as printing and postage, has continued to skyrocket. It's a vast problem for the publishing industry and will certainly, eventually, kill off certain comics and magazines.

...As one who praised *The Power of Shazam* graphic novel in COMICS SCENE, I write again this time to lob a giant photon torpedo at the recently published start of the monthly magazine version.

At the end of the graphic novel (GN), Captain Marvel is shown as a reasonably mature, confident, pipe-smoking adult who passes himself off as Billy's uncle and smoothly cons Billy's school principal into thinking things are secure in the Batson household.

The sequence gives the impression that "the Wisdom of Solomon," as amplified by "the Power of Zeus" (which adds to the other powers as well) has begun to kick in, thereby giving Marvel his own personality—one that has vastly superior mental capabilities, along with the more intelligent control of emotions that "wisdom" implies. For the Shazam/Batson/Marvel relationship to work effectively and believably within its premise, the mental powers, personality, vocabulary, etc. have to increase as dramatically as the physical powers and appearance. Otherwise, you have Billy Batson, superkid, which is what was presented in the monthly.

As mentioned in my original letter, if the same personality exists in both characters, Marvel would never change back to Billy. Even in the imaginative world of comics, there's no one on the planet, adult or kid, who—given the chance to be themselves in human form, with all of the problems, dangers, maladies, etc. to which they would be susceptible—or be themselves as the magically powered, invulnerable Captain Marvel, capable of dealing with anything—would ever consider reverting back to just being another face in the crowd.

Plus, there's enough evil in the world to make being Marvel a full-time gig, with as much overtime as he could handle. "Stamina of Atlas" notwithstanding, if he needed a break, he could pull a Clark Kent and wear a suit over the costume, or, as a last resort, change back to Billy, with all of the problems to which that form is completely vulnerable, including death.

Issue #1 also has some other big problems in both story and art, including: The time frame for the monthly occurs four years after Billy got the powers in the graphic novel. Yet, he's shorter, dumber and has a worse haircut. If he was (as he appeared to be in the GN) about 10 or 11 then, and in about fifth or sixth grade, he should be 14 or 15 now—and a freshman or sophomore in high school, even if he flunked a grade. As a high schooler, he would no longer have "Miss Wormwood" as a teacher—and he would be taller, smarter and more "hair-aware."

The Captain, unfortunately, is portrayed throughout as no more than Billy with muscles. He displays none of the increased maturity implied at the end of the GN. In the party sequence, it's "Billy with muscles and bad manners." Besides that, in keeping with his powers, he shouldn't have to eat or be hungry. As Billy, yes—as Marvel, no. The scene also implies that in the four years Billy has had the powers, there has been no contact, no "mentoring" by Shazam—which raises the question as to why the wizard would be so angry over something as minor as going to a party.

The interior art falls far short of Jerry Ordway's dynamic cover and GN, and is light years behind the superb renditions done by Don Newton and his inkers in *World's Finest* in the early '80s (which were the best portrayals of the character in story and art, ever!).

On the splash page of #1, Marvel has a full head of hair, a widow's peak hairline (one of the physical trademarks of the character since the '40s) and a relatively lean jaw; facially, he looks to be in his mid-to-late 20s. By page 6, the widow's peak is gone (and stays gone until p. 20), the hairline is receding and balding at the temples, the face becoming more pudgy around the jowls, giving him the look of a man in his late 40s.

Other problems: On page 20, Marvel claims he "smiles a lot," yet is shown smiling only on the splash page; he handles just about everything else with an emotional response ranging from annoyance to rage. Traditionally, however, the character has always been known for his sense of humor and laid-back approach to solving problems, which also made him unique in the comic-book world of generally angry or guilt ridden superheroes. Also, why the look of anguish, pain and/or anger just about every time either of them says "Shazam?"

Obviously, one response to all of the above would be, "Hey—it's only a comic book." On the other hand, since comics are an enjoyable hobby for most of your readers, perhaps these comments will be of interest. Since Captain Marvel has been my favorite since the '40s, I've thrown what Dennis Miller would label "a minor rant" on seeing such a watered-down, lesser-powered, humorless version of a comic-book legend presented as being "true to the original."

Hopefully, things will take an upswing in characterizations, story and art—and deliver on the potential suggested in the graphic novel.

Fritz Peerenboom
4358 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43220

Art: Bob Muleady

FOREVER MAN

signed by Bob Kane, which ays 'Good script,' I think, How did I get *this* lucky?' "

Goldsman, it seems, just keeps getting luckier. Following the success of his second script, the adaptation of John Grisham's *The Client*, and the anticipation for *Batman Forever*, Goldsman, as writer/producer, has won the task of bringing *Lost in Space* to the big screen. In the face of the inevitable spotlight being focused on him, he's trying to remain humble.

"Because I'm the latest writer on *Batman Forever*, I get the notion from people that I am the author of the script, but I'm *not*. A script for a film of this size is utterly collaborative. Many people have been involved. What I am is a member of a creative team. Lee and Janet Scott Batchler had worked with Joel [director Schumacher] to develop some of the original concepts for the movie," explains Goldsman, "but because of some contractual obligations, they had to move on to another studio and another project. I had worked with Joel on

of *Freak Force 5*, mentions that the paper that had first been used for the title, apparently the same paper used by many of Image's creators, had a "pesky glare." And he changed paper. It didn't lower the book's price; in fact, the price quickly rose from $1.95 to $2.50 (which puts Image high on my "dump if you have to" list, but at least someone noticed that the paper was less than perfect).

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Art: Bob Muleady

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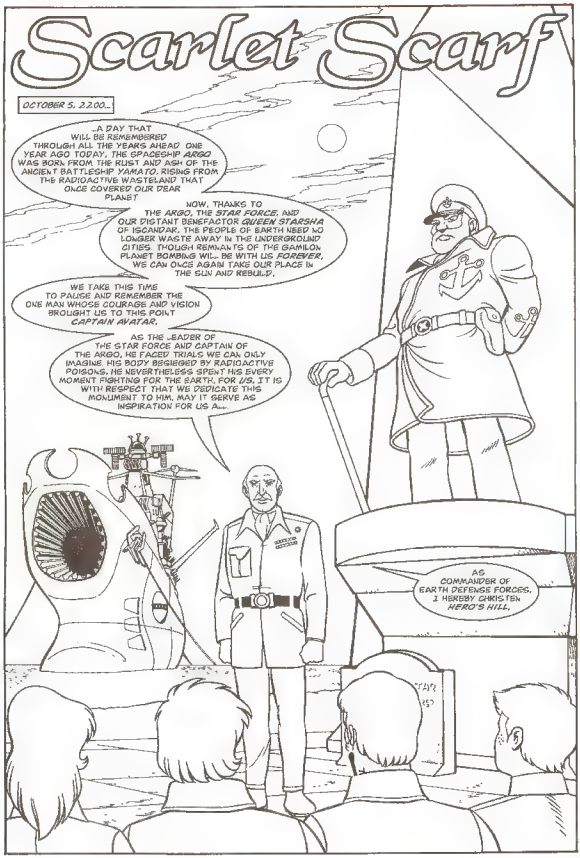
Art: Bob Muleady

FOREVER MAN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AS COMMANDER OF EARTH DEFENSE FORCES, I HEREBY CHRISTEN HERO'S HILL.

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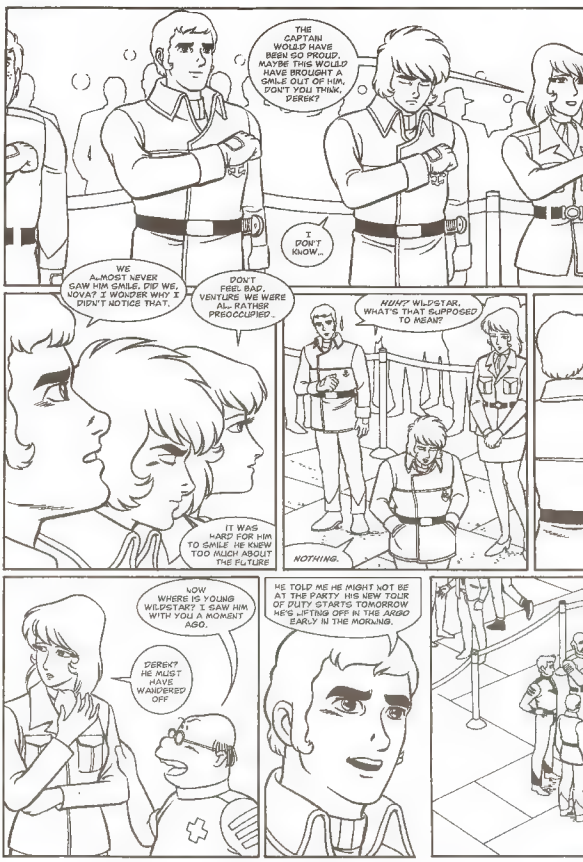
THE CAPTAIN WOULD HAVE BEEN SO PROUD. MAYBE THIS WOULD HAVE BROUGHT A SMILE OUT OF HIM, DON'T YOU THINK, DEREK?
I DON'T KNOW...
WE ALMOST NEVER SAW HIM SMILE. DID WE, VOYAT I WONDER WHY I DIDN'T NOTICE THAT.
DON'T FEEL BAD, VENTURE. WE WERE ALL RATHER PREOCCUPIED.
HUH? WILDSTAR, WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
IT WAS HARD FOR HIM TO SMILE HE KNEW TOO MUCH ABOUT THE FUTURE
NOTHING.
WOW WHERE IS YOUNG WILDSTAR? I SAW HIM WITH YOU A MOMENT AGO.
DEREK? HE MUST HAVE WANDERED OFF
HE TOLD ME HE MIGHT NOT BE AT THE PARTY HIS NEW TOUR OF DUTY STARTS TOMORROW HE'S LIFTING OFF IN THE AGRO EARLY IN THE MORNING.

Art: Bob Muleady

FOREVER MAN

HERE NOW, LADS AND LASSIES, I HOPE YOUR EVENING ISN'T TOO FULL.
IT MAY BE OUR LAST CHANCE TO SEE EACH OTHER ALL IN ONE PLACE.
DON'T WORRY, ORION. THE WORLD TOUR HAS KEPT US PRETTY BUSY, BUT THERE'S NO WAY WE'D TURN DOWN THE INVITATION TO YOUR PARTY.
EVEN SANDOR FOUND SOME TIME OFF FOR US.
IT WASN'T EASY WITH ALL THE ENERGY NETWORKING ASSIGNMENTS I'VE BEEN GIVEN, IF I'D KNOWN I WAS IN FOR TH G MUCH WORK, I MIGHT HAVE TAKEN MORE SICK DAYS ABOARD THE ARGO!
THAT DOESN'T SOUND RIGHT. HOMER'S GOING, TOO, BUT HE HASN'T TURNED US DOWN. WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THAT BOY? NOVA, GO AND TALK SOME SENSE INTO HIM.
I'LL DO WHAT I CAN, DR GANG.
DEREK, I WISH YOU'D TALK TO ME.

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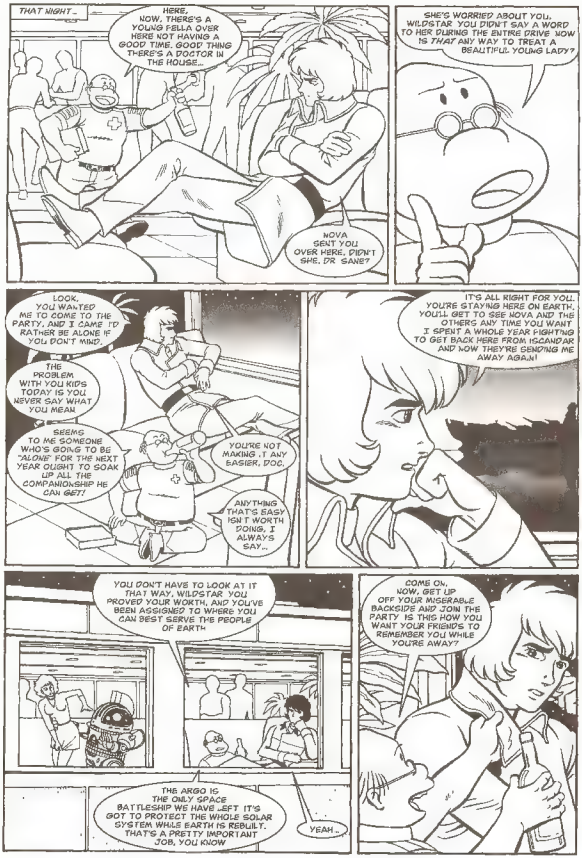
THAT NIGHT...
HERE, NOW, THERE'S A YOUNG FELLA OVER HERE NOT HAVING A GOOD TIME. GOOD THING THERE'S A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE..
NOVA SENT YOU OVER HERE, DIDN'T SHE, DR. SANE?
SHE'S WORRIED ABOUT YOU, WILDSTAR. YOU DIDN'T SAY A WORD TO HER DURING THE ENTIRE DRIVE. NOW IS THAT ANY WAY TO TREAT A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG LADY?
LOOK, YOU WANTED ME TO COME TO THE PARTY, AND I CAME. I'D RATHER BE ALONE IF YOU DON'T MIND.
THE PROBLEM WITH YOU KIDS TODAY IS YOU NEVER SAY WHAT YOU MEAN
SEEMS TO ME SOMEONE WHO'S GOING TO BE "ALONE" FOR THE NEXT YEAR OUGHT TO SOAK UP ALL THE COMPANIONSHIP HE CAN GET!
YOU'RE NOT MAKING IT ANY EASIER, DOC.
ANYTHING THAT'S EASY ISN'T WORTH DOING, I ALWAYS SAY...
IT'S ALL RIGHT FOR YOU. YOU'RE STAYING HERE ON EARTH. YOU'LL GET TO SEE NOVA AND THE OTHERS ANY TIME YOU WANT. I SPENT A WHOLE YEAR FIGHTING TO GET BACK HERE FROM ISCANDAR AND NOW THEY'RE SENDING ME AWAY AGAIN!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOOK AT IT THAT WAY, WILDSTAR. YOU PROVED YOUR WORTH, AND YOU'VE BEEN ASSIGNED TO WHERE YOU CAN BEST SERVE THE PEOPLE OF EARTH.
COME ON, NOW, GET UP OFF YOUR MISERABLE BACKSIDE AND JOIN THE PARTY. IS THIS HOW YOU WANT YOUR FRIENDS TO REMEMBER YOU WHILE YOU'RE AWAY?
THE ARGO IS THE ONLY SPACE BATTLESHIP WE HAVE. SET IT'S GOT TO PROTECT THE WHOLE SOLAR SYSTEM WHILE EARTH IS REBUILT. THAT'S A PRETTY IMPORTANT JOB, YOU KNOW
YEAH...

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As mentioned in my original

years behind the superb renditions done by Don Newton and his inkers in *World's Finest* in the early '80s

Art: Bob Muleady

FOREVER MAN

NO ONE WILL REMEMBER ME THEY'LL ALL BE TOO BUSY GIVING SPEECHES AND GOING ON MORALE TOURS. WE ALL KNOW HOW IMPORTANT THAT IS!
FIRST YOU COMPLAIN ABOUT GOING BACK INTO SPACE, NOW YOU COMPLAIN ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO ON EARTH! SOME PEOPLE ARE NEVER HAPPY!
AW, JUST LEAVE ME ALONE! YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT ME..
I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU TO RETURN THIS TO CAPTAIN AVATAR'S QUARTERS, WHERE IT BELONGS
NOW I DON'T THINK I'LL BE SO POLITE!!
BAM!
KIDS HAVE NO RESPECT FOR ELF.
CAPTAIN'S LOG ARGO 2199-2200
HUH?

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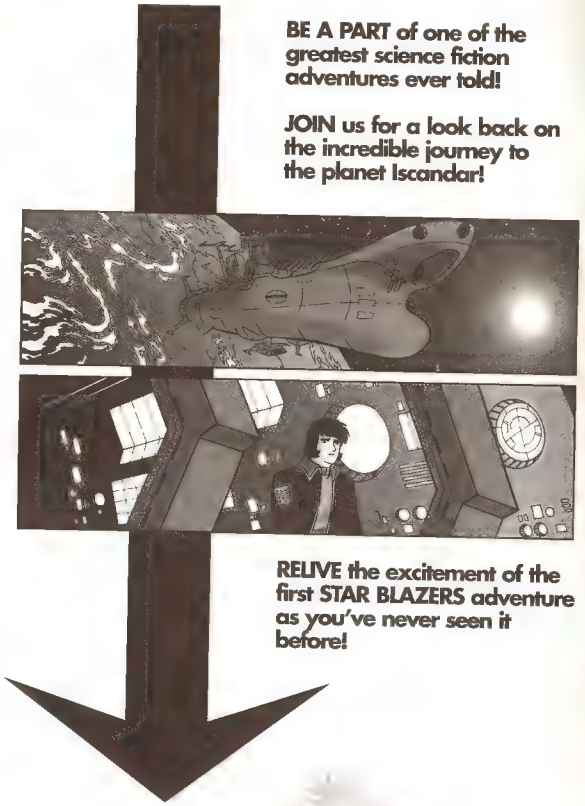
BE A PART of one of the greatest science fiction adventures ever told!
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RELIVE the excitement of the first STAR BLAZERS adventure as you've never seen it before!
STAR BLAZERS
THE MAGAZINE OF SPACE BATTLESHIP YAMATO
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FOREVER MAN

There's a new Batman on the big screen. Screenwriter Akiva Goldsman helped get him there.

By MARC SHAPIRO

When the original *Batman* movie came out, Akiva Goldsman was not yet a screenwriter. He did not even have a nodding acquaintance with the business. But he was a Batman fan of major proportions. "If somebody had come up to me at that point and said, 'One of these days, you could write one of these movies,' I probably would have laughed or cried," speculates the *Batman Forever* scripter. "When I look up from my computer these days and look at the picture of Batman and Robin, signed by Bob Kane, which says 'Good script,' I think, 'How did I get *this* lucky?' "

Goldsman, it seems, just keeps getting luckier. Following the success of his second script, the adaptation of John Grisham's *The Client*, and the anticipation for *Batman Forever*, Goldsman, as writer/producer, has won the task of bringing *Lost in Space* to the big screen. In the face of the inevitable spotlight being focused on him, he's trying to remain humble.

"Because I'm the latest writer on *Batman Forever*, I get the notion from people that I am the author of the script, but I'm *not*. A script for a film of this size is utterly collaborative. Many people have been involved. What I am is a member of a creative team. Lee and Janet Scott Batchler had worked with Joel [director Schumacher] to develop some of the original concepts for the movie," explains Goldsman, "but because of some contractual obligations, they had to move on to another studio and another project. I had worked with Joel on

Oscar-winner Tommy Lee Jones takes over the role that didn't make Billy Dee Williams famous—former District Attorney Harvey Dent, a.k.a. Two-Face.

"This is a younger Batman and he fits into a world that has more colors to it and isn't as dark or Gothic as the Tim Burton world," Goldsman relates.

All Batman Forever Photos: Ralph Nelson/Copyright 1995 DC Comics

The Client and he was kind enough to call me. I've been a huge Batman fan since I was a little kid, so being asked to script this movie was a slam dunk for me."

The writer officially came on board the project in spring '94 and immediately immersed himself in the Dark Knight mythos—specifically, the comics ("I love Frank Miller's stuff"), the animated TV series ("It looked real edgy and dark") and, to a lesser extent, the '60s television show. Goldsman also returned to the previous two Batman movies and had his initial impressions of those films reinforced.

"I loved the first movie," he says. "People have said there were plot problems and I suppose, in hindsight, there were probably things that could have been done differently. But I thought it was an honest updating of the Frank Miller 'Dark Knight' myth and a spectacular piece of filmmaking. The second film erred on the side of darkness. I was a little bit too spooked by the Penguin. The way the film held together was a little too dark for me."

Batman Forever begins with the escape from Arkham Asylum of former District Attorney Harvey Dent, a.k.a. Two-Face. Half of Dent's face was scarred by acid, leaving him a demented criminal. Now he's plotting a major crime spree in Gotham City as well as revenge against Batman, whom he blames for his deformity. The film flashes to the Wayne Institute, where super tech-head and Bruce Wayne admirer Edward Nygma is about to present a plan to his boss for a device that generates interactive holograms for television-type entertainment.

Life has a way of throwing those odd curveballs. Not six years ago, Akiva Goldsman was a face in the crowd. Now, he's the writer behind *Batman Forever*.

Unfortunately, since the device also has a dangerous mind manipulation side effect, Bruce puts an end to the project. Nygma snaps, eventually transforming from mild-mannered nerd to the demented, capering Riddler. The Riddler's out to get Bruce Wayne and Two-Face harbors a vendetta against Batman, so it's not long before the two villains team up.

Adding further complications into the mix is Dr. Chase Meridian, a new love interest for Bruce Wayne with her own set of hangups, and an orphan named Dick Grayson who begins the rocky road to becoming Robin.

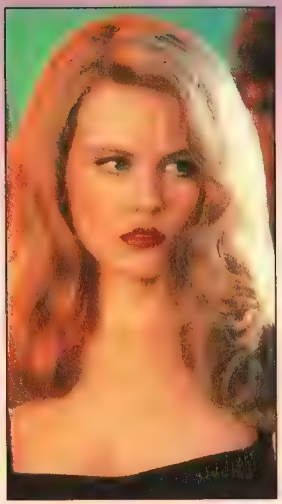
Val (*Willow*) Kilmer, of course, has succeeded Michael Keaton as the Dark Knight. Jim (*The Mask*) Carrey is the Riddler, and Tommy Lee (*The Fugitive*) Jones is Two-Face. Chris (*The Three Musketeers*) O'Donnell dons the mantle of Robin, while Nicole (*Malice*) Kidman takes on the role of Dr. Chase Meridian. Returning from the previous Bat-films are Michael Gough (STARLOG #215) as Alfred and Pat Hingle as Commissioner James Gordon (STARLOG #216). The *Batman Forever* cast also includes Drew Barrymore, Debi Mazar, Rene Auberjonois, Ed Begley Jr. and Don "The Dragon" Wilson.

Directing chores on *Batman Forever* have been passed to *Flatliners*' Schumacher. Handling the producing duties are Tim Burton and Peter MacGregor-Scott. Executive producers are Benjamin Melniker and Michael E. Uslan .

Other key creative personnel are special FX supervisor John Dykstra, art director Barbara Ling, cinematographer Stephen Goldblatt and costume designers Bob Ringwood and Ingrid Farren. Elliot Goldenthal has written the score.

Goldsman ticks off "three formal

Goldsman and director Joel Schumacher decided to go with a not-so-boyish wonder and cast the manly Chris O'Donnell as Dick Grayson.



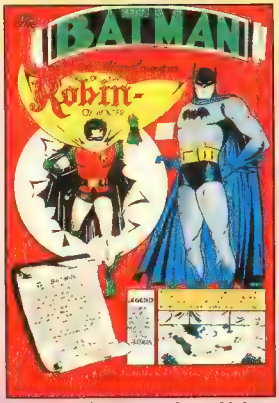
"The Batman movies have always been about duality and, in that sense, Dr. Chase Meridian fits right in," says Goldsman of Nicole Kidman's character.

Goldsman was not the only writer to breathe life into Val Kilmer's maiden voyage as the Dark Knight. Lee & Janet Scott Batchler were the original scribes.

drafts of the script and a whole lot of colored pages" as his contribution to the cause. "Things changed for many reasons as the project came closer and closer to happening," offers the writer. "We stared at it more and more closely and began to understand what things worked in the script and what things didn't. The concept of the movie, which is really Joel's, stayed the same all the way through, as did the principal players. But what those characters do and how they do it changed pretty much with each draft."

Several of the most thought-out changes were in the characters of Batman and Bruce Wayne. "The one thing we took very seriously was how to breathe new life into Batman. Tim Burton did what he did beautifully, but we're doing another Batman. Val Kilmer is playing him, *not* Michael Keaton. This is a younger Batman and he fits into a world that has more colors to it and isn't as dark and Gothic as the Tim Burton world. Val is incredibly charming, handsome and very physical, so we've made him very believable in all contexts of this film. Whether he's Batman doing action sequences or being the most charming guy in Gotham City as Bruce Wayne, it will all ring true."

While Goldsman concedes that *Batman Forever* is "a much funnier and more playful movie than the previous two films," he warns fans that the twisted side of Batman will not be ignored. "Bruce Wayne's motivations will be explored in the serious way that you would explore the motivations of anybody who has aberrant behavior. Bruce Wayne is somebody who has had a profound trauma, and this trauma has resulted in a kind of acting out as Batman. He knows what it's like to have a life ruled by revenge. With this film, we go back and revisit his origin and come to a new and different understanding of *why* Bruce Wayne became Batman."



Goldsman, a longtime Bat-fan, tackled a character that was first introduced in 1940, but has yet to make it into the '90s—Robin, the Boy Wonder.

In adding Robin/Dick Grayson, Goldsman worked to form an emotional bond between the Dark Knight and his new partner. "We've revised the thematic notions of Robin's origin to the degree that Batman is present when Dick Grayson's parents and brother are killed, so he sees an echo of his own origin. We've changed the Batman-Robin relationship in the sense that, in the comics, there was an eager acceptance of the partnership between the two. What their relationship in this film will say is that the last thing we want somebody to go through is what we already went through. Bruce knows what it's like to put on the cape and cowl every day and go out and get the crap kicked out of him, and a big part of him doesn't want Dick Grayson to go through that. But he does, and so an uneasy kind of partnership is formed."

Adding to this uneasy alliance is the way Grayson has been characterized by Goldsman. "Robin has a remarkable edge to him in this movie. He's much tougher than the Robin in the comic books. He's older and has basically been a gypsy all his life, and so he does not automatically buy into the aristocratic world of Bruce Wayne."

Photo: Copyright 1966 Greenway Productions & 20th Century Fox

Goldsman feels that Jim Carrey's performance as the Riddler is an homage to Frank Gorshin, the 1960s Riddler.

All Art: Copyright 1995 DC Comics

"The first day I saw Jim Carrey on the set, I knew we had nailed the right combination of elements to make *Batman Forever* work," raves Goldsman, who wanted to devise a character of many colors.

The writer's approach to devising truly larger-than-life villains centered on the reality of the Dark Knight's world. "The thing about a Batman movie is that everybody has to be really smart. The Batman world is a very hyperbolic place in terms of action and intellect. Anybody who wants to do something in Batman Land can imagine the technology sufficient to create it. Batman is a normal human being and yet he has created all these remarkable devices. For the Riddler to be a worthy adversary, he had to start out being nearly as smart as Bruce Wayne and then get even smarter. I tried, very simply, to make him as clever as anyone could imagine. It doesn't hurt, when you're attempting to show off a character as having many colors, that you have Jim Carrey in the role."

To Goldsman, the Riddler's partner, Two-Face, is the flip side of the villainous coin, so to speak. "The Riddler is the lilting darkness. Two-Face is the sinister darkness. The Riddler conceptualizes the crime and Two-Face implements the crime. Two-Face is your basic monster. He's stronger, darker, scarier and tougher."

While the introduction of Dr. Chase Meridian may be perceived by many as just another love interest, Goldsman claims that his creation belongs to the often twisted world of Batman. "The Batman movies have always been about duality and, in that sense, Dr. Meridian fits right in. She's a specialist in abnormal psychology and is very prim and proper on the surface. But she's also aware of her somewhat twisted attraction to

What are little criminals made of? Sugar and Spice (Drew Barrymore and Debi Mazar) and a whole lotta vice, of course!

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

"We've revised the thematic notions of Robin's origin to the degree that Batman is present when [the Flying Graysons] are killed," the writer offers.

When Goldsman came on board *Batman Forever*, he immersed himself in Bat-lore, including the animated series. "It looked real edgy and dark," he says.

people who are different and so, in her own way, she's also a split personality. We have a situation where she is alternately attracted to Bruce Wayne and to Batman, while not knowing that they are the same person."

Goldsman returns to the notion of the *Batman Forever* script as a collaborative process. "This script was difficult in two major areas. One was projecting honest emotion in the characters and still staying within the film's tone as an alternate reality. The other tough thing was to create new and different things for a comic-book hero in a world where we've already seen everything.

"I had no contact with Tim Burton, but Joel and I talked a lot and, between the two of us, we were able to imagine ourselves into any emotional situation and just make up what we felt these characters *might* feel. When it came to creating the physical action of the script, John Dykstra was a lot of help. He suggested what might or might not work in a particular scene and how the actors and FX could be coordinated for the best possible effect. It was essentially Joel's concept, but he was very good about releasing me as the writer and letting me come up with what I thought was the best version of his ideas."

of mine when I was a kid," he explains. "When other kids in our neighborhood were playing cops and robbers, one friend of mine and I would be running around my house playing John Robinson and Don West."

He hasn't yet begun writing the script, but Goldsman is already certain of one thing. "No, it will *not* be camp like the TV series. The model will be

Why bother with the Caped Suspender and the Boy Blunder when you can give Chase Meridian a piece of your mind?

Goldsman's very first script, *Indian Summer*, later retitled *Silent Fall*, was made and released last year. Still, despite having three produced screenplays, he's reluctant to talk about anything except *Batman Forever*. With a little prodding, he agrees to divulge some facts about the development of *Lost in Space*.

"*Lost in Space* was a favorite show

Goldsman's childhood infatuation became reality about eight months ago when two of his good friends at New Line Cinema, executives Michael DeLuca and Richard Saperstein, contacted him with an offer he couldn't refuse. "They told me the film rights to *Lost in Space* were available and they asked me if I wanted them to buy them. I said, 'Yeah, let's do it.' "

Star Wars, a real science fiction action-adventure thing. The movie will have the same characters but not necessarily the same character types. At least part of the script will be the origin story, because we do have to get the *Jupiter 2* off the launch pad."

Goldsman was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, the son of what he jokingly describes as "a long field of

"The Riddler is the lilting darkness. Two-Face is the sinister darkness. The Riddler conceptualizes the crime and Two-Face implements the crime."

Gotham City—there has never been a more wretched hive of scum and villainy. It takes a hard man to keep it clean, and that man is Batman.

psychologists." Consequently, Goldsman gravitated toward that line of work and, well into his late 20s, worked as a mental health consultant helping schizoid and autistic children.

"I was having a fine time doing what I was doing but, one day, I was giving a lecture and I looked out into the audience and I thought, 'My God! I've become my mother.' Don't get me wrong, I love my mother, but I didn't want to be like her. So, I cashed everything in and wrote a script. It was a script that got me a lot of attention and I was very lucky that people were willing to meet with me. One thing led to another and I ended up working as a uncredited Mr. Fix-It on a number of productions that I'm not allowed to talk about. Then, *The Client* came along and now *Batman Forever*."

While it's a foregone conclusion that, three movies into the series, *Batman Forever* won't be the compendium of camp that the television series was, Goldsman uses the recent pronouncement that Jim Carrey's performance would be an homage to Frank Gorshin, the '60s TV Riddler, as a jumping-off point to defend the film's dramatic integrity.

"The television series was great fun, but it was high camp and this is *not* high camp. Batman has always been kind of a succession of traditions, and the myths surrounding the character have changed form all the way down the line. There are certain things in this movie that will produce a wry smile on audiences' faces. But this is definitely *not* the television series.

"Bruce knows what it's like to put on the cape and cowl every day and get the crap kicked out of him," reveals Goldsman.

"But the first day I saw Jim Carrey on the set, I knew we had nailed the right combination of elements to make *Batman Forever* work. He was out there on the set doing his Riddler thing and he was so unbelievably hilarious and unbelievably spooky that I felt, 'My God! We have the real Riddler.' And there was the day I was out at the Dome in Long Beach and I saw the full-sized Batcave. Few things in my life were as thrilling for me as that day was."

Given his enthusiasm for *Batman Forever*, one might assume he would jump at the chance to script yet another Batman film. Akiva Goldsman's response is optimistic yet guarded. "Some other ideas are already being discussed, but I don't know what the future will bring," he explains. "All I can say is that there are still a lot of good Batman villains out there."

CS

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CASPER

Photo: David James

Bill Pullman and Ricci play a father and daughter faced with the paranormal problem that is Casper and his mean uncles, the Ghostly Trio.

By PAT JANKIEWICZ

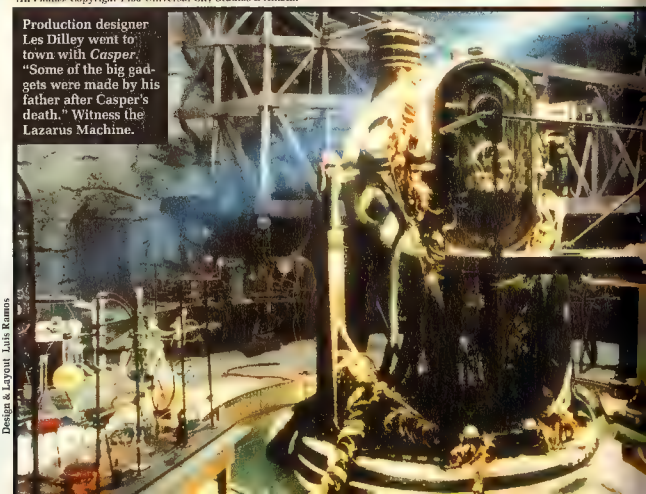
All Photos: Copyright 1995 Universal City Studios & Amblin

As dark clouds gather over Universal Studios and souther California experiences a torrential thunderstorm, it seems like the perfect day to visit a haunted house.

Walking toward Whipstaff Manor, you pass through a yard complete with a Gothic stone fountain and skeletal trees. Passing into the house, you're greeted by an insanely curving staircase that leads to a brass piranha bannister. The walls are covered with cobwebs, old art and crossed swords. A giant stained-glass skylight tops the massive, multi-level room. The place resembles a cross between Hearst Castle and Disneyland's Haunted Mansion.

The ghostly effect is dampened somewhat when you realize that the spirits walking around the set are crew members, go-fers and teamsters, not the living dead, and that this isn't a house at all, haunted or otherwise, but actually a set on Universal's backlot inside Stage 12, the studio's biggest soundstage. It's another day of shooting for Amblin Entertainment's live-action feature film adaptation of *Casper, the Friendly Ghost.*

Casper is best known from his cartoon and comic-book escapades with Wendy the Good Little Witch, Night-



Design & Layout: Luis Ramos

Production designer Les Dilley went to town with *Casper*. "Some of the big gadgets were made by his father after Casper's death." Witness the Lazarus Machine.

THE FRIENDLY GHOST FLIES TO & THROUGH THE SILVER SCREEN

Casper has everything you need for a great ghost movie: a young ingenue (Christina Ricci) and great FX (by ILM)—all they're missing is Whoopi Goldberg.

Photo: ILM

Photo: David James

Director Brad Silberling has nothing but great things to say of his *Casper* team. "When you get the luxury of coming onto a 'ship' like this, it's just outstanding."

Photo: David James

Casper & the Ghostly Trio Characters Trademark Harvey Comics

mare the Ghost Horse (neither of whom are in the film) and his nasty relatives, the Ghostly Trio (who are). The happy spirit began his cartoon career a half-century ago in 1945, when his creator, animator Joe Oriolo, featured him in several shorts (beginning with "The Friendly Ghost" and "There's Good Boos Tonight") after Oriolo unsuccessfully tried to sell him as a children's book.

The film tells Casper's whole story—including his life before ghosthood—with yet another of those comic-book movie origins. New characters and a touching backstory have been added. And don't worry, cartoon lovers: When Casper tries to befriend people, they *will* run away screaming, "A gh-gh-gh-ghost!"

Jettisoning some of the incidental characters, the film gives Casper new friends: ghost therapist Dr. James Harvey (Bill Pullman, named after Casper's comic book publisher, Alfred Harvey) and his daughter Kat (Christina Ricci). They move into the friendly phantasm's home, Whipstaff Manor, whose owner, Carrigan Crittendan (Cathy Moriarty), hires Harvey to drive Casper and his hot-tempered uncles away. Previous exorcision attempts—by Father Guido Sarducci and Ghostbuster Dan Aykroyd (in full uniform)—fail miserably. [Aykroyd advises them to "call somebody else!"]

While most of the film's cast are on set today, there's one noticeable absence—Casper himself, who'll be added later by Industrial Light & Magic. When audiences see ILM's work on Casper, they won't be disappointed. Casper and his uncles look like full-size, three-dimensional beings—who just happen to be translucent.

While cast and crew go about their business, one can't help but notice one man clad in a leather jacket and red scarf hunched over a computer in the corner of the set. As his computer screen shows the actors, he speedily draws Casper into the frame. That man is Phil Nibbelink, one of America's quintessential animators who graduated to director of such films as *We're Back* and *An American Tale II: Fievel Goes West*.

"I'm the animation director—I call myself the 'Casper-mator,' " he jokes. "Ian [Kelly, the video engineer, who sits at another nearby console] and I work together to create the video storyboard for Casper-matic, as we call it. I'm sitting here animating on my Amiga [a

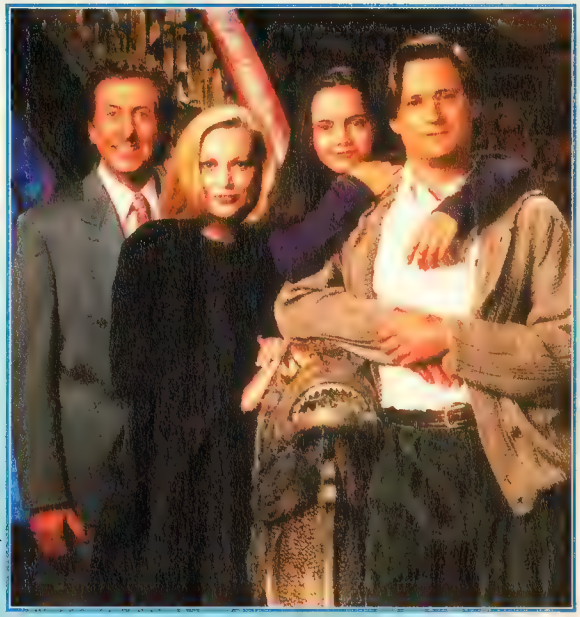


Photo: David James

Not only will *Casper* benefit from state-of-the-art FX, but it also has the services of a tried and true cast—Eric Idle, Cathy Moriarty, Ricci and Pullman.

scene of Casper hovering over Ricci] while Ian sends me the live video signal. This imagery I'm drawing is being superimposed straight to the incoming video signal. We send that straight onto the floor where the guys use it for the ghosts' head height, eye direction or gag placement.

"We start with puppets [doubling the ghosts], but that doesn't work if the characters are doing something anti-gravity or something morphy. This is a way for the director [Brad Silberling] and I to work out exactly what the characters are going to be doing. It becomes a guide for the animators at ILM; it's a video storyboard. This will all be replaced at ILM. 'Casper-matic' is a great tool for Brad to try out ideas; it's easier to experiment."

Photo: ILM

"Our ghosts will do just about anything you can imagine," boasts FX man Michael Lantieri. "We've done sword fights between Bill and the Ghostly Trio."

The Casper that Nibbelink draws looks more mature than the regular cartoon ghost. "He had to be a little older to fit into this story, because he falls in love with Kat, who's a 13-year-old. We had to stretch Casper out a little bit, make him a little older than the original character design. He's now about 11. The original cartoons made him a bit younger, about six or seven years old."

Nibbelink did a great deal of character design on the film. "Casper had to be older, but the Ghostly Trio was wide open," he smiles. "Even if you look at the original cartoons, you see they didn't have a specific model sheet for the trio; there were many different ghosts that Casper interacted with, so it was up to us. The script already called for 'Stinkie, Fatso and Stretch,' so that set the characters right there. When we got the actors, their voices evolved them further. Their behavior and personality has been sculpted greatly by the actors." In the film, the Ghostly Trio are being voiced by actors Joe (*Viper*) Nipote, Joe Alaskey (*Tiny Toon Adventures*' Plucky Duck) and Brad Garrett.

The friendly ghost retains his strange flying style. When he flies, Casper is not only fearless but feetless. "He had feet when he would land and touch the ground in the cartoons, but when he flew, he would be more aerodynamic," the animator notes. "We've designed legs and feet 'inside,' so he's like a little boy in a pajama suit: You see knees and anatomy inside the bag. He's like a seal—a seal has all its bone structure, but aquadynamics or, in this case, ectodynamics take over; Casper becomes more streamlined."

On *Casper*, the crew had to deal with two different types of difficulties. "The toughest from a hard work point-of-view is the Ghostly Trio, and towards the movie's end, there are five ghosts flying around. It's a lot of work!

"The other tough thing is when Casper gets into subtle acting, like here," Nibbelink says, pointing to the computer screen, which shows Casper floating above Kat, "where he's having a bedtime conversation with Kat. It's all very subtle; they're talking about gentle issues. A scene like this is tough from Casper's acting point-of-view, because any false move will get a laugh out of the audience—a wrong laugh. So you have to be very careful not to be too broad."

Nibbelink was a directing animator on *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, a film many of the crew liken to *Casper*. "On *Roger*, we found it frustrating because there was such a gap between what the live-action guys did and what animation was able to do," he says. "I wanted to be on this movie because I knew I could fill that gap and be the missing

link between live action and animation.

"I've been able to catch some stuff on the floor which was impossible, because toons can't do some things. For example, Casper's arms are short and they would hold a prop out too far away from his body, impossible for him to grab. I would discover that by doing a drawing here. In *Roger Rabbit*, you could stretch him because he was a broad character of the Tex Avery school. Casper's a straighter character, and you don't want to be too goofy with him."

Halfway across the set, several cast members lounge about. Casper's mean-spirited uncles, Stretch, Fatso and Stinkie, are all lying against a wall. They look like distorted versions of the Uniroyal Tire Man. On closer observation, it's apparent that they're only maquettes—foam rubber puppets standing in for the ghosts until Industrial Light & Magic creates the reel thing.

One reason the sets look so atmospheric is because they're being lit by Dean Cundey, the director of photography behind *Jurassic Park*, *Roger Rabbit*, *The Flintstones* and all three *Back to the Futures*. The likable, bearded cinematographer (profiled in STARLOG #103) stands in a haunted hallway of the mansion set. Although the hall seems to stretch to infinity, it's actually only a foot deep and blends into a painting—a clever forced perspective.

Cundey says he's giving the film moody but realistic lighting, instead of the garish look seen in some movie haunted houses, "because the computer technology being used to create and animate the ghosts will make them look more real than previous animation. We decided to make it look as real as possible. You always enhance for dramatic purposes, not just to add style.

"These animated characters are going to be translucent—you'll be able to see through them, so you have to make it look realistic. A film like this one is groundbreaking, and for that reason, it's very involving from a creative standpoint. You have a chance to try new things and go into new areas of technique, technology and storytelling. With *Jurassic Park*, we were able to take computer technology and graphics and use it in a developed way.

"The thing about *Casper* and any special FX film is that you always have to think," Cundey states. "It isn't a matter of just lighting a set to look good, be moody or enhance drama, you also have to think about characters that aren't really there. Then, you have to decide what kind of techniques you can use to embellish the moment, to further the illusion that the characters are there. It's a really involving film."

Cundey feels that "one of my big challenges is to be sure Casper is a real character who you believe possesses life. Everybody here thinks of him as a character, and the young gentleman [Malachi Pearson] who voices Casper is on the set, so you're always aware of the presence of a real living voice. Everything we do is designed to create the illusion that he's there."

Ricci plays Kat, the daughter of Dr. James Harvey, ghost therapist, who is hired to rid the mansion of ghosts. Instead, Kat decides to befriend one.

The cinematographer, who recalls reading *Casper* comics as a kid, enjoys "dealing with new technology very much. It makes the storytelling process fun, because you always have to stay one step ahead of the technology and the audience," he smiles. "You have to find new ways to keep the audience fooled!"

Production supervisor Steven Molen acts as a liaison between the production company and the visual FX house. As he observes Bill Pullman being humorously tortured by the Ghostly Trio, Molen says that "it's a very ambitious project, with many great people bringing it to life. It's difficult because you have all this interaction with three-dimensional characters who don't exist. You rehearse the movement with a puppet or maquette to get a sense of motion and framing in the shot. There's a kitchen scene where Kat goes exploring and hears Casper making breakfast.

"It's a big moment in their relationship," Molen points out. "She overcomes her fear of him and they start to interact with one another. You have Casper cooking with pots, pans and spatulas, eggs frying, steam, forks moving, all tied into the movement of this three-dimensional character who has yet to be rendered into the scene that you're shooting. The thing you must realize when you look at the sets is that the colors weren't picked because the doors look good with the walls, they were all actually picked because of what kind of background the ghosts would play best against.

"*Jurassic Park* was a tremendous achievement," Molen relates. "You had three-dimensional dinosaurs. Now, not only to do our ghosts have to perform and show emotion, they also have to be *funny*! People are going to be awestruck by this picture—it's like nothing they've ever seen before!"

Michael Lantieri, Oscar-winner for *Jurassic Park* and *Congo* staffer, stands center stage, checking and prepping all the various devices being used to simulate Casper picking up something. "Once again, I'm mechanical FX supervisor," he says. "For me, it's a great deal like *Roger Rabbit*, except we're seeing through our ghosts, so it's a little tougher—we can't hide our rigging anymore. We're seeing right through our work!

"You also have to draw a line somewhere where the computer generated FX will come into the real world. That's where the visual/optical FX person and I work closely together. We'll figure out what we can do live-action and where we can put in the computer image to blend it in. If it were all computer graphic images, you wouldn't see Casper touch anything in the real world, and if it was all mechanical, you would see all the traditional rubber puppets. Somewhere along the line, we

Photo: David James

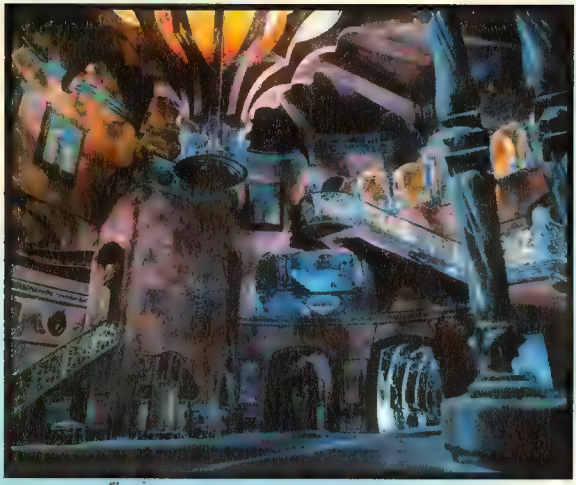


Photo: David James

"I didn't want to make the traditional Victorian haunted house that everybody is familiar with," Dilley states.

try to bring a CGI character into the real world by having him touch and break and push and come in contact with real things.

"We use the puppets for reference, and anything that happens live on the set, we build, supervise and execute to blend in with the computer graphic imaging that's going to take place. So, if a ghost picks something up, we're preparing to throw some pictures up in the air and blow them up. Later on, we'll put in the ghosts with guns shooting them out of the air."

With so many of the crew veterans of *Jurassic Park*, comparisons between these two productions might seem natural. "The toughest job you do is the one you're doing at the time," Lantieri laughs. "It's trickier. This is more sleight of hand, with hidden and subtle FX!"

The toughest task so far was "when we had Casper squeezing oranges, making a pitcher of orange juice and pouring it into a glass. We used real oranges, a real pitcher and a real glass, and we had to fly that stuff through the air and make it pour. After we get all that done, we have to put our ghost in! We've done sword fights between Bill Pullman and the Ghostly Trio.

"Our ghosts will do just about anything you can imagine in this movie; they're pretty mischevious. We've had to rig Bill so it looks like he's getting pushed, pulled, shoved and tugged by ghosts. There's an entire dance sequence that's up in the air, so we're flying people and rehearsing them for

Photo: Ron Batzdorff

Phil Nibbelink, the animation director, took inspiration from his goofy Ghostly Trio voice actors, Joe Alaskey, Brad Garrett and Joe Nipote.

reference. We're doing an air jitterbug, with the ghosts and Bill. The worst part or the good part, depending how you look at these things," Lantieri sighs, "is if it all works well, you'll never know we were here—you'll really believe in ghosts!"

Ironically, this marks the FX man's second cartoon project in a row. "I was raised on *Flintstones* and *Casper* as a kid, and now I've worked on both of them. On *Flintstones*, we had to build cars, props and everything you saw in it from scratch. *Casper* is much tougher because you're dealing with ghosts who are up in the air and not on the ground. It's hard to make things look believable when they're not on the ground. You have gravity working against you!

"Fortunately, we've come from a learning curve—Dean Cundey, our grip crew and electric crew, they all went through *Roger Rabbit* and we've used that curve to apply a lot to *Casper*."

Molen's most difficult task on the film involved disappointing his child. "My six-year-old son Andrew loves Casper. He's thrilled I'm doing it, but the big problem is, he comes on the set and can't see Casper! I had to explain where Casper is," the young father laughs. "He's still in the computer! Casper's hiding in there, but he'll come out and you'll see him in the movie. At least on *Jurassic Park* we had full-size dinosaurs he could see. Here, we have puppets!"

British producer Colin Wilson remembers, "We had *Casper* as a child, as well as *The Flintstones*. I co-produced *Flintstones* with Bruce Cohen and I'm producing this with Steven. What intrigues me about *Casper* is that it's a family-oriented project. It's something you can bring the whole family to, something that will appeal to everyone."

Casper's production designer Les Dilley is also a fantasy film veteran, with such projects as *Star Wars*, *An American Werewolf in London* and *The Abyss* on his résumé. Dilley is proud of what he has done for the friendly ghost. "I've made him a house," he laughs.

"I've made him an environment to live in and I've created many gadgets that are part of his life. Actually, they were part of his death, because some of the big gadgets were made by his father after Casper's death to bring him back to life. I made the Lazarus Machine, which will rise up out of water."

The modern movie haunted house look has been firmly established in recent years by such films as *Beetlejuice*, *High Spirits* and *The Addams Family*. "Obviously, I didn't want to make the traditional Victorian haunted house that everybody is familiar with," Dilley states. "I came up with this

Gaudíesque style of architecture.

"Several turn-of-the-century architects influenced me in the overall look of the house, particularly Antonio Gaudí and Hector Guimard, an art nouveau architect and designer who did the Paris Metro. This film has a lot of 19th-century influences; it's very European looking. I don't think Gaudí would like his work described as 'cartoony Gothic,' but you could say that. The Winchester House [in San Jose] really gave us ideas for opening doors with strange things inside and blind staircases that went to nothing, which we have, as well as painted corridors, forced perspective and the idea of madness attached to it. I generally created an unusual haunted house," Dilley boasts. "It's different architectually, and will be pretty wild!"

Long-haired and soft-spoken, *Casper* director Silberling moves around the set with a relaxed ease. Clad in jeans, a sweater and a small Casper pin, the just-turned-30 Silberling looks completely unfazed at helming a multi-million-dollar special FX-extravaganza. As another camera set-up is being arranged, he sits down on the wildly twisting stairs for a quick conversation on friendly ghosts.

"When I got a call from Steven about it, I said, 'The thing about Casper is everyone's memories are quite narrow and thin; everybody remembers a soft, potentially wimpy character who you think would be tricky to build a picture around,' " the director states. "What's fun is we're taking advantage of that and really creating a character who's going to surprise everybody.

"He's definitely a boy, but he's a little bit of a Puck [from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*], a little impish, but he has very credible emotions and a sense of humor. He's surrounded by his uncles, the Ghostly Trio, who are out of their heads. It has given us a neat opportunity, and when people find out about the picture, they're gonna be shocked.

"It has been a blast," he admits. "I was directing a TV pilot in Hawaii [*Byrds of Paradise*] up until the night before Christmas [1993]. I got this phone call from Steven a week before the holidays. He said, 'Good news/bad news: The good news is the movie is a go, the bad news is it goes in five weeks.' I had no prep time on this film, and when I came in from Hawaii, we did major reconstruction on script elements.

"I come from the world of television, where you have to fight for everything. The great thing about TV is you shoot under some of the worst conditions, so you get used to any obstacle thrown at you. When you get the luxury of coming onto a 'ship' like this, it's just outstanding. The crew is tremendous, respectful and very creative. With them, it isn't a question of 'why,' but 'how can we do it for you?'

"We had a set start date because of the amount of computer-generated work," he explains. "It's a monstrous endeavor that didn't have the prep it should have. I'm used to short schedules, eight to 10 days, and this will be 85 days by the time we wrap. It's like running a marathon. I always work from what I call 'stupid optimism,' which is: 'Why not?' I said to Steven, 'If I ever stopped to think about what I was doing for my first movie, I would probably have lost my mind!'

"If I ever stopped, I would have been overwhelmed. Now, I've had a great time and approached it the way I always do, which is, 'Just think of the whole fabric of the picture, keep a sense of style to it, and a sense of humor with the crew.'

"It has been great. I'll be in shock when it's over," Silberling jokingly admits. "I'm sure I'll go through a major post-partum depression!"

Silberling began his career as a UCLA grad student whose graduate thesis film *Repairs* ("My perverse adaptation of Richard Bach's *Illusions*!") led to a contract at Universal Studios, a story that echoes Spielberg's own. "My career was patterned after Steven's," the director reveals. "In junior high school, I used to play hookey on Fridays and go to Universal. I met a secretary and would call and ask her for walk-on passes. I called them drive-ons, because I would come on my bike. I found if you were young and held a coffee cup on a set and looked like you knew where you were going, it was an instant ticket on. I would just observe constantly."

Was the director a Casper fan as a kid? "Honestly?" he grins, "Absolutely not! I had no attitude towards Casper. I wasn't a detractor or a fan. I remember the cartoon and the theme song, but I didn't remember the background characters. I simply remembered Casper, his voice and the theme song. While shooting, depending on our moods, we re-create the lyrics!

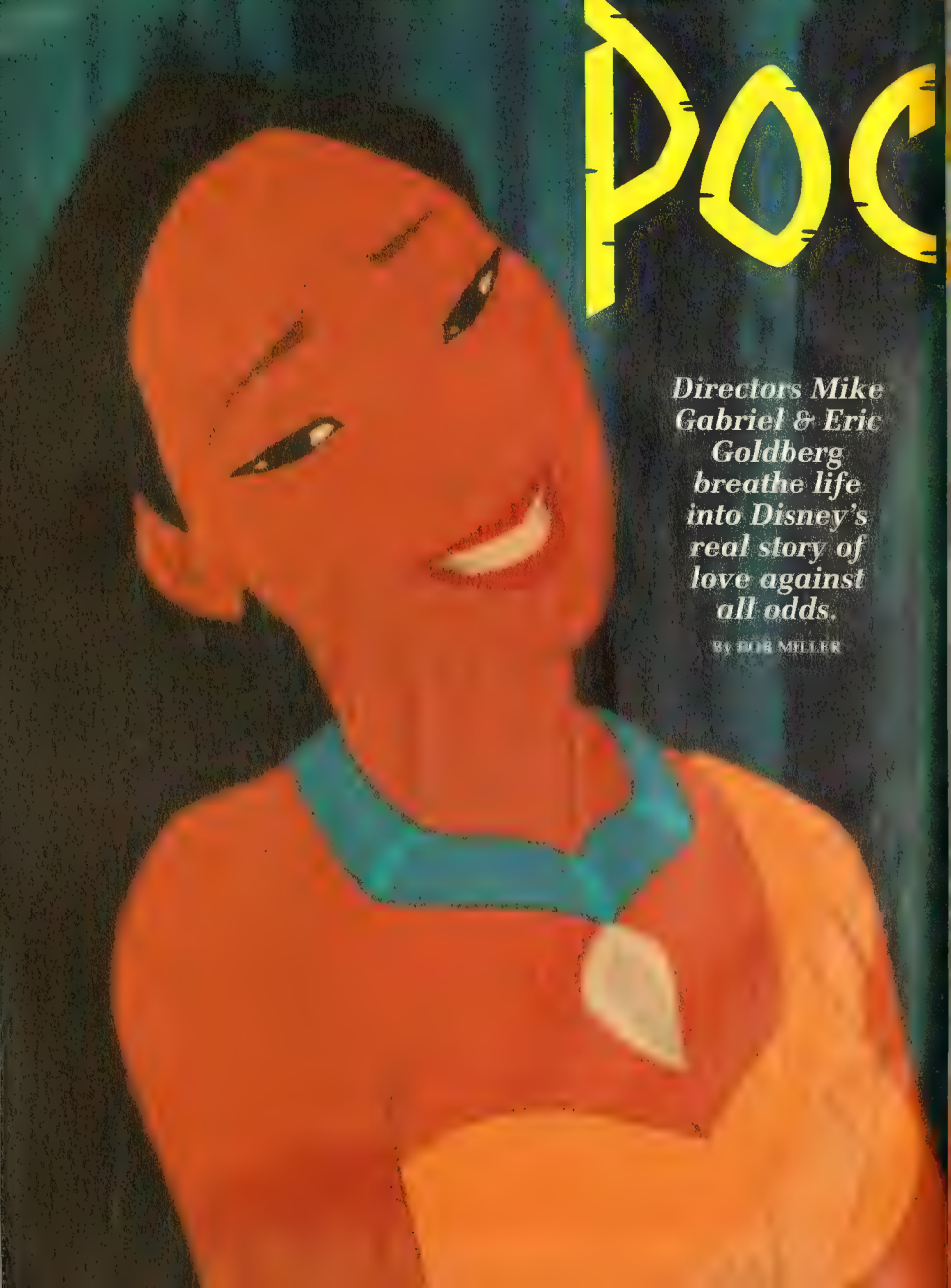
"Depending on who you ask, the budget is $40 or $41 million, the bulk of which is these wonderful sets," he says, gesturing to the amazing haunted house surrounding him. "Stage #27 was a huge underground laboratory—Casper's deceased father is an inventor in our storyline.

Production designer Steven Mölen has some words for all you kids looking for Casper. "He's still in the computer! Casper's hiding in there."

Photos: David Hayter

"The digital and computer-generated work we're doing is, without a doubt, an amount that has never been done before. *Jurassic Park* had 54 shots in total with the dinosaurs; we'll probably wind up with close to 300 shots. In this movie, the CGI shots are characters who speak and emote. They're not just spectacle—they're living characters in the movie."

Standing on the staircase, Brad Silberling looks down on his massive set, watching the workers run to and fro. "This is a crew that has been together for years. Dean Cundey's crew, in particular, have done many great Amblin productions. It's funny," he smiles, "when I was prepping the movie, I was so floored by everybody, I said to Steven, 'I feel like I have the keys to Dad's car!' Steven said, 'No—you have the keys to the limo!' "



Poc

Directors Mike Gabriel & Eric Goldberg breathe life into Disney's real story of love against all odds.

By BOB MILLER

POCAHONTAS

Native American actress Irene Bedard provided the speaking voice and some of the visual inspiration for the heroine of Disney's latest animated musical.

The Walt Disney Company has the reputation of producing the greatest animation in the world, but equally important, if not more so, is their ability to tell a compelling story. It's a legacy that directors Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg struggle to maintain for Disney's 33rd full-length animated feature, *Pocahontas*, which will be released June 23.

This film offered new challenges for the crew: an emphasis on realism in movement, dealing with actual historical characters and tampering with historic events, politically volatile subject matter, a not-so-happy ending that concerned Disney stockholders, upper management pushing for the film to be considered for a Best Picture Oscar and, of course, the pressure of meeting public expectations, topping past successes like *The Lion King* artistically, critically and at the box office.

The story of *Pocahontas* is simple yet powerful. It's a tale of two clashing cultures, told through the eyes of two people, one from each group, who fall in love and try to prevent a war.

"We *tried* to be as factual as we could, and still tell an interesting story," Gabriel says. "I think the historians should be quite impressed with the specific details of our movie: the manner of travel, the props, the way the Indians and the settlers looked, the way they built Jamestown, the way Jamestown looked. The historical facts are all pretty accurate.

"Pocahontas *did* spy on Jamestown, she was intrigued by John Smith, and she finally met him. The natives did clash with the whites. The broad facts are accurate, but it certainly isn't going to be a history lesson for anybody to go by if they don't crack a history book to find out the truth.

"The facts *really* are: She was a Native American girl, she was 12 years old and she ran around naked." Gabriel laughs. "We weren't going to do those things. People differ on whether she actually fell in love with John Smith. We like to think she did. So to tell that story, we had to age her to about 17—and put clothes on her."

All Pocahontas Art: Copyright 1995 The Walt Disney Company

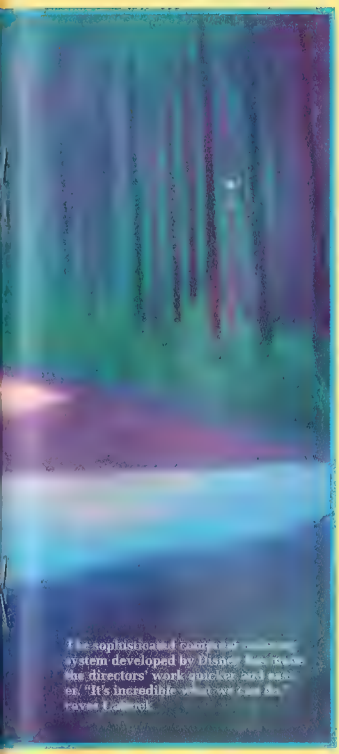
In the film, Pocahontas has *two* voices, though it's difficult to tell them apart. Her speaking voice belongs to Irene Bedard, the Native American lead of *Lakota Woman: The Siege of Wounded Knee* who was also seen in *Squanto: A Warrior's Tale*. Her singing voice is provided by Judy Kuhn, a Tony-nominated Broadway veteran who appeared in *She Loves Me*, *Les Miserables* and the recent LA production of *Sunset Boulevard*.

"As it happened, Judy was the first one to put down the demo of 'Colors of the Wind,' and nobody could knock it out of the park like Judy," Goldberg says. "She just had a beautiful, beautiful voice. When we cast Irene, the happy accident was, of course, their two voices matched beautifully. We didn't have to do a thing to either voice to make them match. It was completely, totally convincing."

Captain John Smith's acting *and* singing voice come from actor Mel Gibson—an interesting choice, since in 1979, Gibson's Australian accent was judged to be too thick and he was dubbed for the American release of *Mad Max*. But, in *Pocahontas*, "you hardly notice any accent at all, actually," Gabriel avows. "He didn't put on an English accent. It's very standard King's English speech.

"I pitched him to Jeffrey Katzenberg and Michael Eisner. I had heard his voice on a PBS documentary about lions. Even before I was on *Pocahontas*, I thought {snaps fingers}, '*That's* the guy we have to use for animation.' You can tell when a voice is made for animation.

Pocahontas' constant companions are a hummingbird named Flit and a raccoon named Meeko, but though they have definite personalities, the animals don't talk.



The sophisticated computer animation system developed by Disney has made the directors' work quicker and easier. "It's incredible what we can do," raves Gabriel.

"We did listen to tapes of Tom Cruise, Kenneth Branagh and others, but Mel brought so much charm and presence and charisma—and sex appeal—to the voice, too. So, I had originally thought of Mel as John Smith and believe it or not, Julia Roberts as Pocahontas. I'm embarrassed to say it now, but she has a great voice and a likable, playful quality that I thought Pocahontas would have."

Chief Powhatan, Pocahontas' father (supervising animator Ruben Aquino), is voiced by Indian rights activist Russell Means, but sung by Jim Cummings (Darkwing Duck, CS#22). Gordon Tootoosis is the Shaman Priest, Kekata. James Fall is Pocahontas' betrothed, Kocoum.

"This film presents flawed people on both sides," promises Gabriel. Flawed is a polite term for the greedy John Ratcliffe, voiced by David Ogden Stiers.

The lush forests of Virginia provide the backdrop for a story of adventure, exploration, culture clash and forbidden love in *Pocahontas*.

Michelle St. John is Pocahontas's best friend, Nakoma.

On the English side, *Beauty & the Beast* veteran David Ogden Stiers (STARLOG #183) sings and acts Governor John Ratcliffe (supervising animator Duncan Marjoribanks) *and* his aide, Wiggins. Christian (*Newsies*) Bale voices Thomas (supervising animator Ken Duncan), a young English soldier and friend to John Smith. Scottish comedian Billy Connolly and British comedian Joe Baker voice two of the settlers, Ben and Lon.

As the tale unfolds, Pocahontas has reached a crossroads in her life. Her father, Chief Powhatan, has selected the proud warrior Kocoum to be her mate. But the arrival of John Smith (supervising animator John Pomeroy) has given her another choice. Searching for answers, she gets advice from a raccoon, a hummingbird—and a tree.

"Native Americans believe everything has a life, and a spirit lies within every tree and rock and in all the elements of nature," explains Gabriel. "We have a tree as Pocahontas' spiritual guide and advisor: the Grandmother Willow [supervising animator Chris Buck]. Linda Hunt voices that character. She has this wry sense of humor that's fun.

"Flit the hummingbird [voice effects by Frank Welker, supervising animator Nik Ranieri] and Meeko the raccoon [voice effects by John Kassir, supervising animator Dave Pruiksma] are counterparts to Pocahontas' conscience," Gabriel says. "The hummingbird is always fighting against John Smith, pushing Smith away, and Meeko loves John Smith because he has all this neat stuff [gold coins, a compass], and he's always pushing Smith to be together with Pocahontas."

Goldberg adds, "The third animal in the triumvirate is Ratcliffe's pug dog, Percy [voice effects by Danny Mann, supervising animator Chris Buck]. He is such a little snot," Goldberg chuckles, "that you actually delight in see-

ing Meeko get the better of him, stealing his food and lousing him up. We get a lot of comedy mileage out of that."

The film opens in the year 1607. The *Susan Constant*, a ship under the command of Captain John Smith, lands at the future site of Jamestown, Virginia. Led by the greedy Governor John Ratcliffe of the Virginia Company, the English settlers disembark, make camp and proceed to ravage the pristine New World in a search for gold. It's certainly not a flattering portrait of our European ancestors.

"In this film, we *really* try to present people as something other than good or bad," Gabriel says. "In most animation, you set up the good guys and the bad guys. This film presents flawed people on both sides. There are good traits and bad traits on both sides.

"These settlers are there to escape societal oppression from their country. If you weren't born into wealth, and you weren't the firstborn son, you were doomed to the fields and could never make any money. So, the settlers are heading out to sea in the hopes of finding gold and freedom. The Indians, to them, are almost subhuman. If they deal with them, they'll just wipe them out.

"The message is, we must learn to co-exist peacefully if any of us are to survive," Gabriel explains. "We can't continually hate people different than we are, because we'll all be destroyed. Nature ties into that same theme: You have to co-exist with nature and not destroy it, in order for us all to survive on Earth. These broad themes sweep through the film, but hopefully you'll never feel any kind of finger-wagging or you'll reject it."

"Given the enormity of these movies, they usually settle on two directors," says Eric Goldberg (left), who teamed with Mike Gabriel (right) to helm *Pocahontas*.

Multiculturalism. Feminism. Environmentalism. Spiritualism. With the film endorsing these themes, how do the directors respond to *Pocahontas* being "politically correct"?

"Well, we would take it as a compliment," Gabriel asserts, "because that means we haven't insulted anybody. If we have, it's not out of malice, but out of a desire to make a positive statement. When you take a stand on something in this day and age, you're usually going to insult somebody out there."

Says Goldberg, "We showed the movie to Irene Bedard, James Fall and other Indian advisors. Their reactions were overwhelmingly positive. That means a great deal to all of us. It means our heart is in the right place. They've been touched and moved by it. They feel we've done the subject matter justice, and handled it with sensitivity and care."

"We certainly didn't approach it to be politically correct," Gabriel adds. "We wanted it to be authentic. To us, authenticity is portraying these people as well-rounded, certainly unmalicious and not one-dimensional."

For the sake of authenticity, key writers and artists conducted field trips to Virginia to do research. According to Gabriel, the field trip policy began on the film he first directed, *The Rescuers Down Under*, when he, co-director Hendel Butoy and then-producer Tom Schumacher (now vp of development) proposed a two-and-a-half-week excursion to Australia.

"Since then, we've all gone each time," Gabriel says. "They went to France to research *Beauty & the Beast* [and Africa for *The Lion King*]. Which is just smart, because you're able to inspire the artists to bring something fresh to these stories.

The voice of Captain John Smith is provided by international box-office superstar Mel Gibson, whom Gabriel first heard narrating a PBS documentary.

"We did go to Virginia to get the look and the feeling of the land. It was just as important to meet the Native Americans and be in their presence, to feel what the English settlers must have felt like when they were sitting down with Native Americans for the first time."

Producer James Pentecost, lyricist Stephen Schwartz and writer Andrew Chapman visited Jamestown in June 1992. That October, Pentecost returned with a larger group of eight researchers, including directors Gabriel and Goldberg, art director Michael Giaimo, layout artistic supervisor Rasoul Azadani, background supervisor Cristy Maltese and story artists Ed Gombert, Joe Grant and Randy Cartwright. They visited the Pamunkey Reservation and interviewed historians such as Helen Rountree, author of several books about Virginia's Indians, and Tom Davidson, curator of the Jamestown Festival Park museum.

The group met Shirley Little Dove Custalow McGowan, who worked at the Jamestown Festival Park as an interpreter. Her family is one of several generations of Mattaponi chiefs, and she is a daughter of the current chief, Webster Little Eagle Custalow. She is also a descendant of Pocahontas.

"She had this wonderful presence about her, and she just stares right into your soul," Gabriel relates. "She looks at you as if determining, 'Are you a good person or a bad person?' "

On a separate occasion, Glen Keane —the supervising animator for Pocahontas—sketched and photographed McGowan and her sister for reference, combining the two for the character's look.

"We had her come out once [to the studio] to teach the ways of the Powhatan people, how to say 'hello' and 'goodbye' and the tools that they would use and their manner of life, teaching us how to behave like the Powhatan Indians would," Gabriel says.

"Other Indian advisors came in [to demonstrate] correct dance styles and the warpaint. The actors were very helpful as far as language issues. For example, when Pocahontas is told by her father that someday she'll lead her people, she used to say, 'I would like that.' Irene Bedard thought it would be better if she said, 'I would be honored by that.'

"The writers did a good job researching and we found our groove, so far as you can't do bad '50s Indian-speak. Geraldine Keams was another Indian advisor, and I asked her, 'How should I write the dialogue?' She just said, 'Just the way you and I speak.' So that frees you up."

Historians may debate whether Pocahontas really fell in love with John Smith, but there's no doubt their Disney screen counterparts will.

It has become a Disney tradition that each animated feature is a musical. An exception was Gabriel's first directorial effort, *The Rescuers Down Under*, which *didn't* have song-and-dance routines.

He recalls that "the audience seemed to really miss the heart and soul of these Disney features, which are told through song, where you hear the character's inner feelings, thoughts and yearnings. Through their yearnings, you establish a great theme, a moral or some deep truth that comes true through the movie. That seems to be *more* satisfying than just a light, fun movie. That's more of the corporate feeling. Believe me, it'll be a *long* time before they try another non-musical."

Says Goldberg, "One of the interesting things that happened on *Pocahontas* as we were heading toward the second and third acts is that the preview audiences started regarding it as a *movie*. It wasn't a musical anymore. People wanted to go with the drama and the plot.

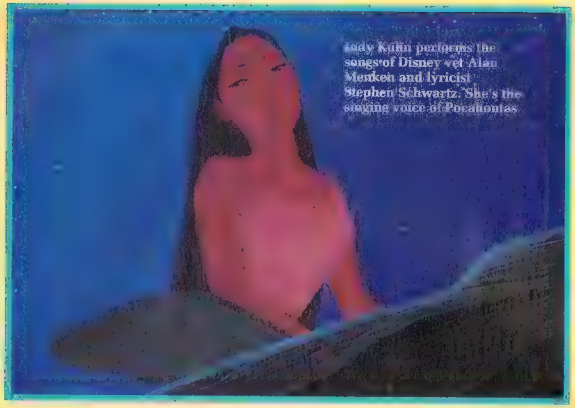
"As a result, we had to lose a song, 'If I Never Knew You.' It broke everybody's hearts, because it had already been animated. Alan Menken is going to continue utilizing it, melody-wise, in the score. It's such a beautiful song. On a stage, that song would play *great*, it just didn't in that moment in time in the film."

"To us," Gabriel says, "that was the *Snow White* soup-eating sequence [animated but later excised], completely animated. I love the animation. And it's Mel singing. It's *beautifully* sung."

"Some of the *finest* work on the film," Goldberg adds. Both directors hope the song will appear in the film's eventual laserdisc release.

Pocahontas features the first major collaboration between Broadway lyricist Stephen Schwartz (*Godspell, The Magic Show*) with Oscar-winning composer Alan Menken (*The Little Mermaid, Beauty & the Beast, Aladdin*). They're currently working on Disney's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* for 1996 release.

"They really weren't ready to meet," Gabriel reveals, "but our producer, Jim Pentecost, begged them to get together just for a half-hour to talk: 'You don't have to write a song; you don't have to do anything.' Well, Stephen did have some lyrics written on a pad. An hour later, they called back and said, 'We've *written* it. We have the first song! It's great.' It was



Judy Kuhn performs the songs of Disney vet Alan Menken and lyricist Stephen Schwartz. She's the singing voice of Pocahontas.

'Colors of the Wind.' You just know you have something special and unique and evocative as soon as you hear it."

After *The Rescuers Down Under*, Gabriel (CS #17) was offered a choice of three scripts ready to go into production. He chose *Swan Lake*. "Joe Grant and I worked on *Swan Lake* for awhile," he recalls. "I was really excited about it. I had some great ideas. We hit a roadblock in our outline/treatment. Jeffrey [Katzenberg] wasn't quite going for it. That's when a 'gong show' was coming, one of these pitch meetings [in March 1991]. *Pocahontas* was an idea that I had, so I pitched it, and that went well. It jumped right ahead of *Swan Lake*.

Goldberg (CS #30), an animation veteran, joined Disney in 1990. He supervised the animation of the Genie in *Aladdin*—a feat for which he is esteemed by the animation community and which won him an "Annie" Award.

"Given the enormity of these movies, they usually settle on two directors," Goldberg says. "I had known Mike before; he had stayed at our house in London. Disney was looking around for somebody who had directorial experience. I had never done a project this large before; I had done TV specials and commercials for a good number of years [at his London studio, Pizzazz Pictures].

"They pitched me the idea, and they had one song written. I didn't know what kind of a project it would turn out to be, but I was quite taken with it, and I went along for the ride.

"I animated a grand total of three scenes of Indian war dances. We had an advisor, Hanay Geiogamah, who gave us the lowdown on dances specific to the Powhatan tribe at this time, for a sequence where tempers are flaring and both sides are heading towards war. Given that I was there for the briefing, I felt like animating something. I figured it was probably easier for me to animate those scenes, since I had all of them in my head."

Both directors worked with the screenwriters—Carl Binder, Susannah Grant and Philip LaZebnik—and head of story Tom Sito to flesh out the script. They approved storyboards, layouts and went to voice recordings together. As the production progressed, they split their duties.

"The message is, we must learn to coexist peacefully if any of us are to survive," states Gabriel about this tale of the bridging of two cultures.

"In my case," Goldberg reports, "I was approving effects for many months and then eventually Mike took that over, and I also approved animation and cleanup. Mike, in turn, covered layout, backgrounds and color models. Mike shot most of the live-action video reference. We would always pick our takes together. Frequently, I would be working with the film editor, H. Lee Peterson, in terms of cutting the takes together and finding the best things to use."

The animators used live-action reference, in which scenes are videotaped with live actors and photostats are taken of the scene. The animators used the photostats as a basis for their characters' movements.

"You can't just take the stuff verbatim and trace it and put it on the screen," Goldberg points out. "Techni-

"The facts really were: She was a Native American girl, she was 12 years old and she ran around naked," admits Gabriel. Some of the facts had to change.

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

cally, even though you could call it 'rotoscoping,' there's still a certain amount of adaptation that must take place before you call it animation. It's really no different from the way that live action was used in *Snow White*, *Cinderella* or many of the other classic Disney films. Because *Pocahontas* is a relatively realistic story, it gave us a good grounding for the kind of subtlety in acting that we wanted. The animators took it and made something special out of it."

Rescuers Down Under was the first animated feature fully colorized by computer, a fact that, at the time, Disney was reluctant to publicize. Since then, Disney CAPS (Computer Assisted Paint System) has made significant advances.

Of Ratcliffe's pug dog Percy, Goldberg reveals, "He is such a little snot that you actually delight in seeing Meeko get the better of him."

Gabriel enthuses that, "It's hugely different in that it has remarkable abilities now, of manipulating imagery, for 'ramping' and controlling color and darkness on each level. It's incredible what we can do with that composite, with that imagery, once we've got it in there.

"The first time, on *Rescuers Down Under*, you had to wait 15 minutes every time you called [a computer image] up. We would sit there with dogs in our lap, just petting them. It would come up, we would color it, blur or darken it and that was it. Now you can take that thing in every direction you want. Red it, green it, take some of this hue out, put that hue in. It's so easy to flop images for reflections. It has a *lot* of capability now that it didn't have before, and they happen [snaps fingers] that fast.

(continued on page 64)

SOVEREIGN SEVEN
RULES

Fielding a new superhero team, Chris Claremont tries to change the rules of the comics creation game.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Their creator was the guiding force behind Marvel's most successful titles for nearly 20 years, but Chris Claremont has put the *X-Men* behind him. Today, he's eager to make his own mark on comics history with *Sovereign Seven*. And in fact, with his new superhero team, he has already done that, even before the first issue hit the comics shops: for Claremont is not only the writer and creator of this mainstream DC Universe series—he remains the *owner* of it all!

Claremont admits he is pleased with his groundbreaking business arrangement, but he's even more excited about the comic itself, which features super-powered refugees thrown into the DC Universe. "They're a team of seven young people, each from an alternate Earth," he says. "They've basically lost everything due to a revolution, and have been gathered together by the one called Cascade for the purpose of overthrowing her mother, whom Cascade considers the most evil being in the universe. They've found themselves cast ashore on our Earth with nothing but the clothes on their backs and whatever physical/emotional/spiritual resources they bring with them."

Sovereign Seven consists of Cascade, who can move across time and space; Network, a powerful telepath; Reflex, who has "a body the size of a house, but great reaction time even though he can't fit through doorways"; the stylish Rampart, who creates shield walls of energy to protect the team; the beautiful Finale, whom Claremont describes as "Dirty Harry with a sword, the one most fully trained as a warrior"; Indigo, who can infiltrate any situation with ease and charm; and the telekinetic, unstoppable Cruiser, "the heavy lifter of the team—a young John Belushi. Why should everybody in this book be beloved?

"Cascade brought them all together, but in this instance, they ended up on the same lifeboat," Claremont quietly explains. "It *doesn't* mean that they're all going to be friends or stay friends. All of the relationships are not cut-and-dried, directions are not set. There's as much emotional suspense as physical suspense. The ideal is to treat them as real people, and see where life takes them."

Cascade (left, with Network) has gathered together seven heroes for the purpose of overthrowing her mother in Chris Claremont's new series *Sovereign Seven*.

Claremont, considered by some to be the most successful writer in comics history for his 17-year run on Marvel's *X-Men* titles, says *Sovereign Seven* is breaking new comics ground because he retains ownership of the series. "It's unique for the mainstream comic industry. This may be taken for granted at a company like Dark Horse, but for Marvel or DC to acknowledge that the creative relationship can be a *true* partnership, rather than employer/employee, is a revolutionary benchmark."

Artist Dwayne (*Wolverine, Stormwatch*) Turner was brought into the project after it had been underway for about a year. "The visual designs are his," says Claremont. "We have a sub-license agreement between each other to make sure *he* is fairly compensated."

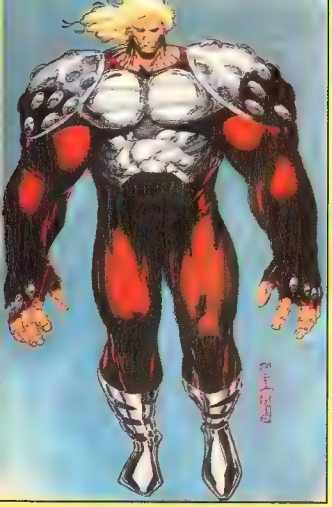
This innovative association came about with "surprising simplicity," reveals the writer. "I offered the series to DC, and [publisher] Paul Levitz was very interested. I told him that my basic position was that I wouldn't surrender ownership, and if he wanted it, we needed to find a way for me to own it. Without batting an eye, Paul said he had no problem with that. I sat another 10 minutes trying to convince him before I realized he had already said yes!"

According to Claremont, it's all part of the natural progression of the comics field, which until recent years has profited through work-for-hire arrangements, with little regard for adequately compensating its creators. *Sovereign Seven* is an indication that

"To me, there's a lot of neat stuff in the DC Universe," says Claremont, whose deal with DC allows him to put this big mystery guest star in *S7*.

I'M NOTHING LIKE MY MOTHER!
OF COURSE NOT, PERIEH, THE THOUGHT.
AN EXCELLENT BREW, VIOLET, AS ALWAYS.
I CAN'T GET ANYTHING QUITE LIKE IT AT HOME.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT MY MOTHER?!
WHO ARE YOU?!

All Art: Dwayne Turner/Trademark & Copyright 1995 Chris Claremont Courtesy DC Comics



According to Claremont, Reflex has "a body the size of a house, but great reaction time, even if he can't fit through doorways."

DC Comics is willing to experiment with other arrangements.

"I hope it's a natural evolution and growth in the perception of the enlightened management of a company in how they need to do business," Claremont says. "None of this occurs in a vacuum—I'm sure DC's willingness to experiment is in part defined by a desire to differentiate itself, in the minds of creators and readers, from a more traditional company like Marvel. There's a very stark contrast in the way those two companies are doing business. In one case, you have a company [Marvel] that views the routes to profit and success as being the maximization of a distribution network, the gathering in of and absolute control over all aspects of production, licensing and now marketing, so that the exploitation process of a character is completely vertically integrated, from top to bottom, and the company can derive the maximum return on its investment. At the same time, that's predicated on the fundamental foundation that the company owns *everything*. [DC seems to be] in the process of evolving to a point where its primary route to success is the riskier, but in the long run far more satisfying option of offering a wider and richer range of material to the marketplace. The way to do that is to bring creators into its fold on terms that allow them to prosper, and also allow them to bring to the publisher their different, groundbreaking—and hopefully not derivative—work."

Claremont believes that others in the industry view the new series as a great experiment. "If *Sovereign Seven* works, then the possibility exists of a Frank Miller or John Byrne coming in and saying, 'I have this series, and these are the terms under which I'm prepared to sell,' and then the creator and the publisher can negotiate in the same way that I would negotiate a novel contract with Bantam or Berkeley," he explains. "You start from the premise that the creator is a business entity in the same way that the publisher is a business entity, and the goal of the negotiation is to find a happy medium where both parties derive benefit from the relationship and both parties, to an extent, share the risk!

"The keystone of the relationship is the desire to maintain it in a strong, positive, progressive fashion for as long as possible. Ultimately, both sides have every incentive to treat each other with respect and consideration, which unfortunately, as history has proven, is *not* always the case with work-for-hire. You run into a situation where, in any confrontation between creator and company, all of the advantages are on the company's side, because the terms of the relationship are those of an employee and employer. The elements from which the profits are derived—the characters, the stories or whatever—are owned by the company.

"Around 1970, when the relationship between Jack Kirby and Marvel deteriorated, if he and Stan Lee had owned all the characters they created, he could at least have taken the visualizations with him, and there would have been a much stronger incentive for Marvel to find a compromise that worked for both sides. Even if Jack had

"I own *Sovereign*. That's the defining element right there!" proclaims Claremont, whose breakthrough deal allows him to retain all rights to his characters.

still left, he would have been entitled to a piece of something.

"When the *X-Men* animated series presented the Dark Phoenix story, I got a 'based on the stories by' credit, but something like that should *not* depend on the kindness of strangers. There should be a contractual framework to allow creators to share in such exploitation. To a certain extent, Marvel and DC do that, but ultimately with Marvel, none of it is guaranteed by contract—it's all done out of the kindness of their hearts, and it shouldn't be like that. If someone is going to create something for a company, the rights and obligations of both parties should be spelled out. It shouldn't be the kind of thing where 'We own it, we own it forever, we own everything that derives from it, you're screwed no matter what.' When Alan Davis and I created *Excalibur*, we knew we were signing over the rights the minute we did the job. It was a situation where a writer or artist could be cast aside, characters could be changed, *anything* could happen without any consideration to the principals involved."

There's plenty of action from the get-go, when the *Seven* heroes drop right in the middle of a clash they can't comprehend against foes they've never seen before.

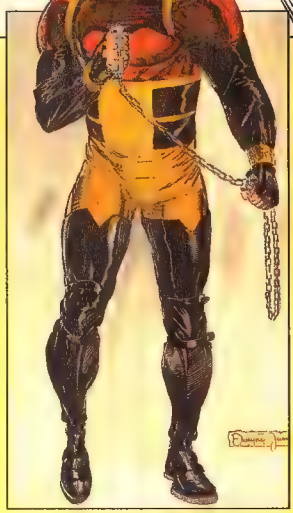
Claremont and Marvel came to a rather acrimonious parting of the ways when Claremont left *The Uncanny X-Men*, a title he helped transform from a floundering bimonthly into the bestselling franchise in comics history. After working on occasional novels and comics projects, including a *Star Trek* graphic novel, several issues of *WildC.A.T.s* and an *ALIENS* mini-series, he decided to create his own super-team series from the ground up. Including it in the heart of the DC Universe was always a part of the concept.

"It was part of the pitch to Paul Levitz," he says. "Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman are primal archetypes that go back as far as comic books themselves. To me, part of the thrust of *Sovereign* is the idea of strangers in a strange land. They've come to a world where they know nothing, one which has a mythos of its own, and they're on a voyage of discovery—everything is new to them."

He notes that he is also, for all intents and purposes, entering the DC Universe on a regular basis for the first time. "Aside from the X-Men/Teen Titans book and a couple of abortive *Superman* stories, I've never written anything for DC," Claremont asserts. "I've read DC as long as I've read comics, but it's all new to me. I've never published a Superman or Batman story, so as I approach this universe as a stranger and meet these characters for the first time, so do the Sovereign Seven. We present a fresh perception of that universe, fully enwrapped in a sense of wonder.

"One of the most depressing things about modern comics is that everybody knows everybody else! It's all taken for granted, and we've allowed ourselves to forget the awe that a character inspires in readers. What makes Batman so scary? What is so neat about Spider-Man? The Sovereign Seven are discovering a land they've never been to before. They've been screwed out of everything they've known and loved, and they're not going to let it happen to anyone else. They're here to protect the innocent and downtrodden—in effect, to be heroes. The problem is, they don't have a scorecard, and they don't know who is or *isn't* a hero. So, they have the ability to make mistakes and screw up. You're getting in on the ground floor of the series, but as the characters learn and grow and mature, so will the readers. Hopefully, whatever insights the characters derive from their being here will be passed on to the readers."

S7's DC Universe contacts will actually begin with the first issue. "To me, there's a lot of neat stuff in the DC Universe," enthuses Claremont. "I could have gone with Dark Horse or Image or created a new universe from scratch, but they don't have that resonance, the collective community memory I have working in the DC Universe. They encounter characters from the DC Universe in the first issue [from Darkseid's world of Apokolips]. They're dropped into the middle of a situation, and they resolve the situation, but do a significant amount of local property damage, and have to clean it up afterward. They don't have the Justice League or millionaire Bruce Wayne to handle it for them. To me, the idea of the voyage of discovery is very strong."



Design & Layout: Evan Metcalf

Cruiser is "the heavy lifter of the team—a young John Belushi—why should everybody in this book be beloved?" Claremont asks.

Claremont notes that with the greater power over his creations comes a greater responsibility. "I hope to approach this with the same degree of concentration and respect that I would a novel. I'm building my corner of this world, putting my characters into it and turning them loose, and I want to see what happens. Essential to that is creating three-dimensional beings, much more so than in a normal comic book environment, because here I have control over their destinies. If something happens to one of the team, there can't be a unilateral editorial decision

By sharing the risk and the rewards on the new series, Claremont hopes he and DC can work fairly and equitably together.

to invalidate it. No one is going to bring anyone back from the dead unless *I* say so! At every step of the way, DC and I are encouraged to play nice with each other, treat each other with respect, to find a positive resolution to conflict.

"Even in the best of circumstances, ultimate power has always resided with the publishers, because the publishers owned the characters and the concepts. The writer and artist are as much hired guns as the letterer or inker or someone doing production work in the Bullpen. Ultimately, everyone is an employee, a module that can be changed if necessary, and rather than work out problems with creators, many editors find it's easier to just get somebody new. The tragedy there is that you lose people who are doing good work, and it leads to a certain level of creative sterility.

"The *Sovereign* relationship is a giant step toward changing those rules, toward saying that the act of publishing a comic book—or even marketing it—is as collaborative an enterprise as the act of creating it. Once a creator turns in their work, they're essentially out of the loop, and while some creators have *no interest* in participating in the publishing side, others do. For me, writing the best book in the world isn't worth a damn if it doesn't get onto the racks and get sold. I have the option of being part of the production process with *Sovereign*. DC and I are *partners* with *Sovereign Seven*, and I think that's about as fundamental a change as you can get. It requires everybody to grow up, and I think that's an attitude that has been sorely lacking in this business."

The first few issues find the team cleaning up after their first battle and learning more about the mysterious cappuccino bar in which they landed.

Sovereign Seven sees the superpowered refugees thrown into the New England town of Crossroads, where they face off against the Female Furies of Apokolips. The first story arc follows up on the fight.

"In upcoming issues, they tidy the mess created during the battle," Claremont relates. "They discover more about the cappuccino bar in which they've landed and the town that it's located in, which straddles the border of New York, Massachusetts and Vermont. The first story arc involves one of the team getting killed. It worked for Thunderbird, so what the hell? The second arc involves the introduction of the book's first original villain, a character called Skin Dance, a serial killer who is one of the more *extreme* forms of corporate recruiter! It also tells you more about the other supporting cast members, including the sheriff and a cute kid who serves cappuccino."

The Crossroads setting may have a heavy influence on certain characters and stories. "Crossroads is an interesting sort of place, where you never know who's going to show up. After that, in the fall, we'll be doing a hunting season story arc—the interesting thing about Crossroads is that the deer shoot back. You go hunting in these woods, you got a 50-50 shot—they have as many human trophies as humans have deer trophies!"

To Claremont, the most important part of the series is the cast. "The thrust of it is to create a team of seven interesting, accessible characters that the audience can empathize with, to create these really nice characters that the audience will fall for big time—and then put them through hell!" he jokes. "Along the way, they'll hopefully grow out of their little upstate shell, and react more with the outside DC Universe. But, as I did with the X-Men, the goal for the first year is to focus on the series and the team, and build up our own coterie of supporting characters, heroes and villains in my own little corner of the

DC world, gradually upping the visual and action ante."

Although some fans will look for similarities between *Sovereign Seven* and *X-Men*, the series he's most closely identified with, Claremont emphasizes that there is a fundamental difference between the two teams. "Marvel owns *X-Men* and I own *Sovereign*," he says. "That's the defining element right there! No one can do to the *Sovereign* characters what has been done to the X-Men since I left—or for that matter, what I did to the X-Men when I took over the book! My perception of the characters was, as time went on, vastly different from Stan's, and even from Len Wein's, and he *created* the new X-Men. *The X-Men* was a book that I took over that had a track record—its reason for being was mapped out. It was substantially a finished concept, in a very real sense of the word. With *Sovereign*, I'm starting from scratch.

"The other difference from *X-Men* is that it could only grow to a point. My feeling was that if you picked up *X-Men* #94, you would see one vision of the team. If you picked up *X-Men* #194, you would see a substantial evolution. If you picked up #294, you would see an even *more* substantial evolution, and so on. From my perspective, these were people who had to grow and evolve and change. Within six months to a year after leaving *X-Men*, the characters became total strangers to my eyes—nothing about the book was at all consistent with my vision of it, and there's no reason why it should have been, since it was being written by different people. But with *Sovereign*, I'm the arbiter of the characters and their destinies—I'm the power, in a sense, that must be deferred to in terms of what's going to happen to it.

Claremont describes Finale as "Dirty Harry with a sword, the one most fully trained as a warrior."

"We have a sub-license agreement to make sure he is fairly compensated," notes Claremont of artist Dwayne Turner, who designed Indigo and the rest.

"That gives me a tremendous freedom in terms of dealing with the audience with true suspense. Unintended as it was, the death of Phoenix gave *X-Men* a tremendous, fundamental credibility that no other series had. If she had not been resurrected later, I think the current *Fantastic Four* storyline with the apparent death of Reed Richards would have much more power, because the readers would think, 'They did it with Jean and they didn't go back on their word—Reed may *really* be dead!' But now, everyone is sitting back going, 'Bullshit!' It may be a new writer, or it may be a marketing guy telling them they need Reed Richards to protect the license for the dolls. I think it's incumbent upon us as creators to treat the audience with a certain degree of respect, because otherwise, what reason do they have to come back and read the book?"

Claremont's specialty may be in treating his comics characters as real people, and he emphasizes that will certainly be carried through *S7*. "A case in point is that in an upcoming book, Cascade is going to lose her wings," he reveals. "To regenerate them involves drawing on her life force. Unfortunately, she's a very slim and powerful figure without much excess weight, and it could kill her to regenerate her wings. So, she has to bulk up and carbo-load big-time, and put on about 40 pounds. Unfortunately, it's a form-fitting costume! It doesn't grow, and while she is no less muscular and powerful, she's carrying some pounds! What does that mean? And can she get rid of them as easily as she put them on when she's a superhero?

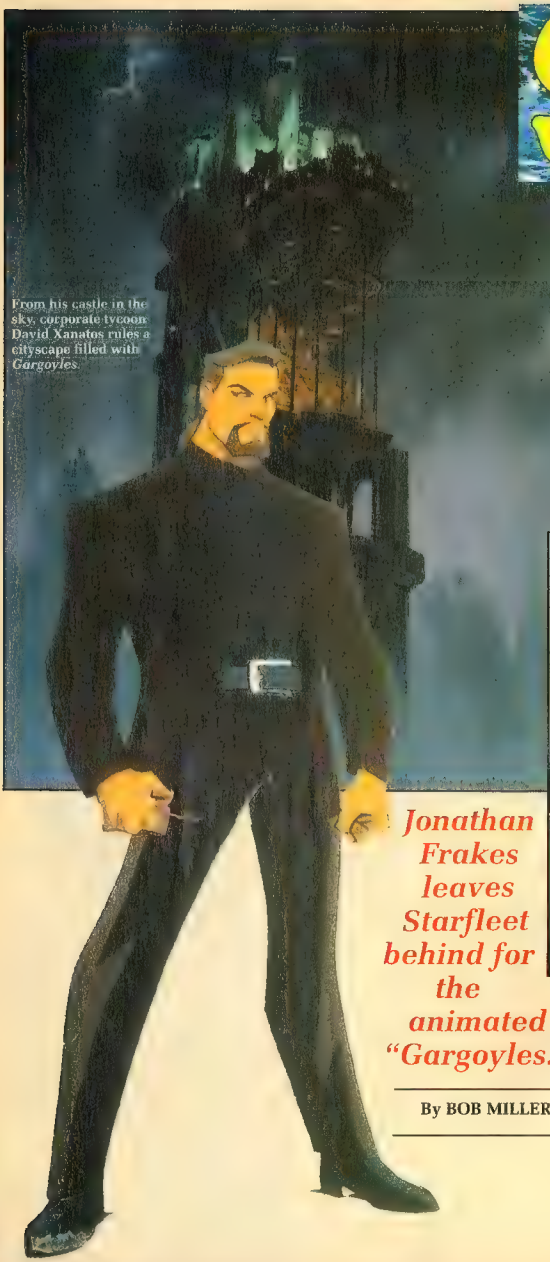
"I like taking aspects of real life and filtering them through the veneer of these fantastic powers. Just because they have these incredible powers doesn't mean they're not human beings. More importantly, they're human beings far from the homes that they believe they cannot go back to, in a culture totally strange to them. They're all royalty, used to being waited on, and now they're forced to work for a living. They have the same problems as everybody else—where do they get clothes? Where do they sleep? How do they pay for their existence?"

Claremont is also taking an active hand in the series' marketing and promotional aspects, noting that in the wake of the distribution revolu-

(continued on page 62)

"As I approach this universe as a stranger and meet these characters for the first time, so do Sovereign Seven," notes Claremont of Rampart and company.

Stone



From his castle in the sky, corporate tycoon David Xanatos rules a cityscape filled with *Gargoyles*.

Jonathan Frakes leaves Starfleet behind for the animated "Gargoyles."

By BOB MILLER

Owen, I think I've created a monster." So says David Xanatos, corporate tycoon who has resurrected seven gargoyles from 10th-century Scotland, creatures he wishes to exploit for his own evil purposes. It's also the voice of Jonathan Frakes, the Harvard-trained actor best known for portraying Commander William T. Riker on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

Frakes has just spoken his last line of the day at Screenmusic Studios in Studio City, California. It's the second episode of *Gargoyles* he has recorded and the end of a four-hour session. Casting director Jamie Thomason thanks him for a job well done, and a technician hums the *Next Generation* theme as Frakes leaves the recording booth.

Jonathan Frakes voices Xanatos while *Next Generation* co-star Marina Sirtis speaks for the evil gargoyle Demona.

"This *is* my first cartoon voice," Frakes confirms. "I auditioned, not quite knowing what I was getting myself into. But, I've kind of enjoyed myself thus far. I must have auditioned four or five times and then was even replaced and rehired, so it has been a rocky road to Gargoyle-land. It has also been good fun."

Frakes has learned that voice-acting

Cold Evil

is a very different discipline from on-camera acting. In animation, actors must rely on their voice alone to convey the essence of their characters. "It's challenging, some days," Frakes chuckles. "Sometimes it's *very* challenging.

"The secrets that I'm learning from these regular voice-actors are silly and yet very important. Many of us work with our hands. We're very conscious of not making extra noise. 'Don't move your paper. Don't move your shirt. Don't move your music stand. Don't hit the light. Don't giggle.' What we're trying to do is create a situation where you can visualize the character, so the voice can be a little bigger than it would be on film. It's much more like playing to the back of the house in a play."

Frakes is very impressed by the veteran voice actors with whom he has worked. "I don't have much range in terms of some of the things these guys can do," he admits. "I don't do impersonations, and the impersonations I've heard coming out of that room are just hysterical. I wish I was better at that.

"I watch more and more closely when I'm listening to voice-overs in cartoons now, and I recognize certain guys. The guys who do this all the time are astounding."

Frakes has labeled Jeff Bennett, who voices Owen, Xanatos' *major domo*, "one of those 'rangey' actors. He does it all. He was doing Thom Adcox [voice of Lexington] earlier, while Thom was in the room. He does a great Jerry Seinfeld, too.

"I just met Frank Welker for the first time. He's a rangey one, too. Those guys amaze me," he says.

Absent from the morning's recording session was Keith (*They Live*) David, voice of the Gargoyle leader, Goliath. "He's wonderful. I haven't seen him in months," Frakes says. "He has been in New York. But there's a voice to be reckoned with. He's a wonderful actor who has a *serious* basso voice. He's about an octave below me."

Several *Star Trek* alumni are also involved in *Gargoyles*, among them Marina Sirtis. "Ah, my Imzadi," intones Frakes, using her *Star Trek* term of affection. "Marina has been a dear friend, and wonderful. I haven't seen her either. It's ironic. It's heavy with *Star Trek* actors. Michael Dorn did a guest spot. Dorn and I should *never* be put in the same room together. Not much work gets done."

According to Frakes, the cast records both separately and together as an ensemble. "It depends upon everyone's schedule," he says. "We did two shows today. The first show had almost the entire cast, so we did it like a play, straight through. And for the second show, which they recorded on Tuesday, I wasn't there, I just did my part. It varies from week to week."

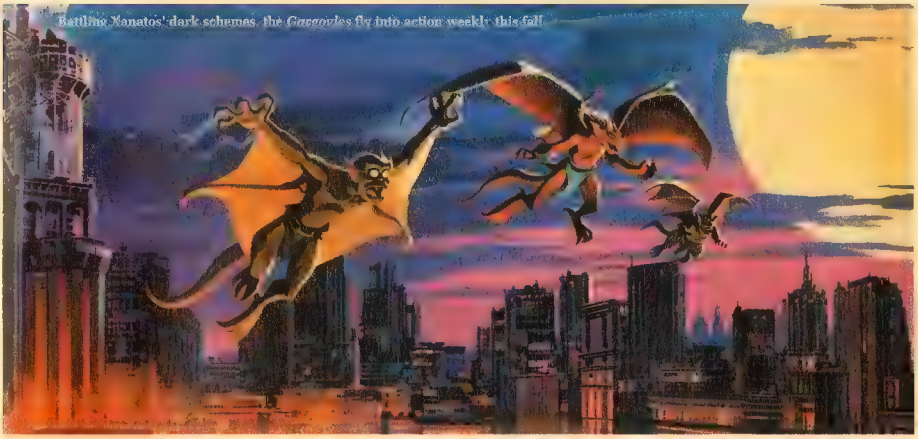
Does Frakes have any suggestions about fleshing out his character for the writers? "No, I am putty in their hands. They tell me what they want me to do and I do it."

Interestingly, the design of Xanatos bears a resemblance to Frakes, which he regards as "a total coincidence. The character was designed months before the casting took place—the beard with the total synchronous loop."

The talented Frakes (who discussed his *Trek* work in STARLOG #173 & #204) has embraced live-action acting, directing and voice-over acting, yet expresses no preference of one over the other. "It's actually fun to be able to do all three," he says. "I'm very fortunate to have learned how to direct. It helps keep you busy. And this cartoon work is a wonderful diversion, because the people are a riot; the work is different than anything else I've ever done, and it has been fun."

Lately, Frakes is concentrating on directing. Under his belt is an episode of Aaron Spelling's *University Hospital*, and he's slated to direct upcoming episodes of *Star Trek: Voyager* and more *Deep Space Nines*. But his latest project is raising his son Benjamin Ivor, born in August 1994.

Now that Disney is beginning to merchandise *Gargoyles*, how does he feel about being yet another action figure? "Oh, God," Jonathan Frakes says. "It's my cross to bear. I wonder how my kid is going to feel when he sees me as an action figure!" CS



Battling Xanatos' dark schemes, the *Gargoyles* fly into action weekly this fall.

All Gargoyles Photos & Art Copyright 1994, 1995 Buena Vista Television

Design & Layout: Freddy Collado

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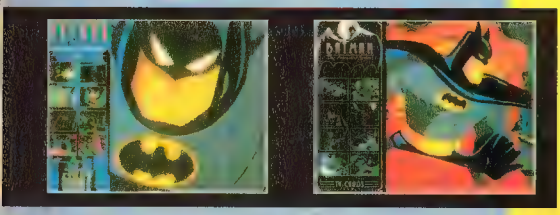

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Under a host of names, Adrian Booth reveled in the adventures of yesterday.

Serial Queen

Selected Photos: Courtesy Tom Weaver

Captain America: Trademark & Copyright 1995 Marvel Entertainment Inc.

In 1944, Captain America made his debut on the big screen with Adrian Booth (going by the name Lorna Gray) by his side fighting the evil Scarab.

By DAN SCAPPEROTTI

As a child, it was her dream to be an actress, but young Virginia Pound was not one just for drawing room comedies or ballroom merriment. She was made of sterner stuff. Her destiny lay in pulse-pounding adventure. And eventually, she would stir the hearts of thousands of teenage boys in such heroic chapterplays as *Flying G-Men*, *Perils of Nyoka* and *Captain America*. First as Lorna Gray and later as Adrian Booth, she was a serial queen.

Born in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1921, Booth was fascinated by show business. As a teenager, her ambition to become a singer led her to New York City, where she joined a vaudevillian singing group, Ben Yost's Varsity Co-Eds. The job took her on the road and, while playing the Palace Theatre in Cleveland, Ohio, she was spotted by a Universal Pictures talent scout and invited to Hollywood for a screen test.

It seemed that every girl's dream was about to come true. "Universal decided not to take me because they said I *couldn't* sing," says Booth, who *was* a singer at the time. "Unfortunately, I was so scared at the audition that it was true."

She soon found herself shuffling between studio casting offices. A short stint at Paramount Pictures was followed by better fortune at Columbia. "I did a screen test and studied a bit with a coach, and then Columbia signed me to do a feature with an option for a contract."

Under the name Lorna Gray, her Columbia days were a hectic rush from one B production to another. She co-starred with Western star Charles Starrett in *Bullets for Rustlers* and *The Stranger from Texas*.

The format that would give Booth screen immortality was alive and well at Columbia Pictures—the serials. She played Babs McKay in Columbia's 1939 chapterplay *Flying G-Men*. In the classic yarn, America's defense industry is being sabotaged by foreign agents

from a secret base. A quartet of valiant government agents are assigned to the case. One of their number becomes the mysterious Black Falcon, a masked pilot who operates outside the bureaucratic structure. When inventor Bob McKay is killed and one of the G-Men dies in the battle, McKay's sister, Babs, is initiated into the group of investigators.

In 1940, sporting a mass of curls, Booth turned up in 15 chapters of *Deadwood Dick*. The Skull, a grotesque killer wearing a death's-head mask, has the famous Wild Bill Hickok murdered to prevent the Dakotas from achieving statehood. Deadwood Dick, a masked avenger, takes up the fight against The Skull and his murderous renegades. This time, Gray played Anne Butler. In one chapter, a statehood rally is broken up when the Skull Gang stampede a herd of cattle through the town.

"We had an assistant director on *Deadwood Dick* who was a real ogre," Booth recalls. "This was a scary scene. Don Douglas and I were on this reviewing stand. The Mayor and all the dignitaries of this little Western town were making speeches, and suddenly there was this cattle stampede. Everyone had to rush off the stand. The last two people to leave were Don Douglas and me. All around this stand was this American Flag bunting. When they started the cattle stampede, we had to get down off the stand using these funny little steps, go around to the left side, tear open the bunting, go underneath the stand, tear off the bunting on the other side and get into a barn door. We managed to get it right on the first take. The director, James W. Horne, was thrilled. After all that, this assistant director comes over, really mad at me because I had lost one of the false curls in my hair."

Between features, the young actress was put to work in several of Columbia's comedy shorts. In "Pest from the West," Gray played opposite the legendary Buster Keaton, but she's better remembered for a quartet of films she did with the Three Stooges.

"It was absolutely crazy working with the Three Stooges," reveals Booth. "They were just as crazy off-screen as they are on it. There was no difference. My husband, David Brian, was in *Crazy Quilt* with them on stage in New York and he went on the road with them. They were fun to work with. Jules White, their director, was the funniest director I ever worked with. He was like a monkey, he was all over the set all the time."

In "Oily to Bed, Oily to Rise," the Stooges save a widow from being swindled. Booth plays May, one of the woman's three gorgeous daughters. Although she's little more than window dressing in that short, she was elevated to co-star in the comedians' next film, "Three Sappy People."

"I'm supposed to be a very rich lady giving a dinner party," Booth says. "Something happens at the dinner party and everybody starts throwing things and a pie fight erupts. Jules wanted them to throw this little piece of pie at me. I think it was Larry Fine who threw it. He threw the pie just as I was laughing and it just *disappeared* right down my throat. Jules said it was the funniest thing he had ever seen, because I went right on talking anyway and they kept it in the scene."

The Stooges are hired as guides by a traveling troupe of show girls in "Rockin' Through the Rockies." Booth plays show girl Flossie. Next up for the Stooges was one of their wartime spoofs, "You Nazty Spy." The actress had a bigger role as Mattie Herring, the daughter of the king deposed by the Stooges.

"We shot those shorts in three or four days," Booth explains. "They were very hectic, especially with Jules White, who was a very energetic man, and so were the Three Stooges. They were never quiet."

***Valley of the Zombies* featured neither a valley nor zombies, but it was a good experience for Booth. "What I loved about the role was I got the chance to do some comedy."**

Zombies Photo: Copyright 1946 Republic Pictures

Columbia then tested Booth for a part in *Drums of the Sahara*, with Paul Kelly. While waiting for the studio to decide, Booth went over to Republic Pictures, the little upstart studio that had risen to the top of Poverty Row thanks to their glossy serial and B-Western productions.

"I made a picture with John Wayne, *Red River Range*, and *Ridin' Down the Canyon* with Roy Rogers. I couldn't ride, so I bought an English riding habit and rode around the trails at Griffith Park. The next day I couldn't stand up. I had never been on a horse before, but I told them I *could* ride. John Wayne was so wonderful. He knew I didn't even know how to get on a horse and he helped me a lot."

Booth returned to Columbia for *The Man They Could Not Hang*. Boris

All Captain America serial posters: Copyright 1944 Republic Pictures

Design & layout: Fredric Collado

Karloff starred as Dr. Savaard, a well-meaning scientist who invents a mechanical heart that can restore life to the dead. Booth was Janet, Savaard's daughter.

Karloff left a lasting impression on the actress. "Boris Karloff! Oh, what a *brilliant* man. Wonderful. One day we were supposed to go outside and shoot on what they used to call the New York Street set. Suddenly, it started to rain. It was very unexpected, so we had to go inside to shoot. He had a solid page of dialogue to do when he was on the witness stand. And you know that man just glanced at it and shot it in one take? He was simply charming. Just one of the nicest men I've ever met in my life. That was the last thing I did at Columbia—after that they dropped me."

Although she rode the range with the likes of Charles Starrett, Wayne and Rogers, Booth has a secret. "I have news for you," she says smiling. "I never did learn to ride. I always fell off my horse, except for almost the last movie I made, *The Plunderers*. For the last four years of my career, I only worked for producer/director Joe Kane at Republic. He loved to have me in his movies, but he would tear his hair out behind my back because he knew I was trying but failing to stay on my horse."

Republic Pictures was the king of the movie serial. Their chapter-plays offered high production values, spectacular special FX and the best stunt team in the business. Booth made four serials for Republic, alternating between good girl and bad girl roles. She was the villainous Vultura

Instead of Steve Rogers, the serial Captain America was D.A. Grant Gardner, who often rescued his assistant Gail.

in 1942's *Perils of Nyoka*, leading a band of renegade Arabs against an expedition searching for the lost tablets of Hippocrates.

There are many facets to Vultura, and the actress had fun bringing her own rendition of some leading ladies to the role. "*Perils of Nyoka* was just a lot of fun," Booth recalls. "One day I would pretend I was Bette Davis, another day I would pretend to be Katharine Hepburn and Marlene Dietrich and it didn't make any difference. I tried them all.

"One of the funniest lines I ever had to say in my whole career was in there. I had to stand there staring at this papier-mâché background with something like a Sun with these rays coming from it and I had to hold out this velvet cape and say, 'Oh light of the Sun, reveal to us now the hiding place of our enemies.' Very seriously. I broke up the first three times I said it and then [director] Bill Witney said, 'Now come on, Lorna. We have to get this.' And then *he* broke up. I was supposed to be Queen of the Tuareg warriors and I had to be serious, but you couldn't be serious saying a line like that."

Man Poster: Copyright 1939 Columbia Pictures

Selected Photos: Courtesy Dan Scapperotti

A sighting by a Hollywood producer while she was in a vaudeville singing act led to a glamorous new career for Booth.

Booth's rather feeble equestrian skills didn't hamper her enthusiasm when it came to driving Vultura's vehicle of choice. "The most fun, of course, was riding across the fields in a chariot with the monkey [Satan, Vultura's pet gorilla]. I did drive the chariot. I would try anything then. I was having a great time and I loved my profession."

Cliffhangers were, of course, the toughest kinds of movies to make. "On a serial like that, you may have what they called a five-way call; for good weather, fair weather, bad weather, inside shooting or shooting outside on the lot. You would have to have dialogue for all of those prepared. Sometimes you would only have five or six hours between [shooting days]. If we had to start on location at 8 a.m. to get all the sunlight that we could and we did a lot of stuff outside, that meant that you would have to leave the studio at 7 a.m. It took them two hours to get us ready, which meant we had to be at the studio by 5 and not get home until 8 or 9 that night. Then, you

Booth calls horror legend Boris Karloff "one of the nicest men I've ever met in my life."

would have all that dialogue to study. Marvelous

The highlight of the 1944 serial season was Republic's adaptation of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby's World War II comic book hero *Captain America*. It's still widely regarded as one of the best serials ever made. Booth played Gail Richards, district attorney Grant Gardner's loyal a Gardner (Dick Purcell) secretly Captain America (there's no Steve Rogers in sight). No shrinking violet, Richards would whip out a gun and plug a villain at the drop of a pocketbook. In the final episode of the 15-chapter cliffhanger, Richards is captured by the Scarab (Lionel Atwill), who has nasty plans for Miss Richards He intends to turn her into a mummy.

"At that chapter's end, they put me in a glass coffin and they had to screw down these brass straps. Then, they put in some stuff to make it look like poison gas and the director hollered, 'Cut!' They went to take me out of there and they *couldn't* open the brass straps. I have a slight touch of claustrophobia and it was terrifying to be trapped in that coffin."

One of the more amusing events in serial history occurs at the end of the last chapter of *Captain America*. As the hour of midnight strikes, signalling the Scarab's execution, the cast looks out their California window and sees London's Big Ben striking the hour.

The next year, the actress was once again a villainess, as Rita Parker, gun moll to the elusive arch-criminal Jim Belmont in Republic's *Federal Operator 99*, a slambang action serial with some spectacular cliffhangers.

Booth's last serial appearance was Dolores Quantaro, the athletic heir to an ancient Spanish land grant now in line to own half of Los Angeles.

Despite limited equestrian skills, Booth appeared in quite a few Westerns, including *Ridin' Down the Canyon*, *Red River Range* and *Deadwood Dick* (Don Douglas, above).

To eliminate her, a crooked relative sends her a birthday present—a bomb. Not falling for the trick, Dolores takes the package out into the hills and detonates it with a well-aimed arrow.

"I had to shoot a bow and arrow," she remembers. "Sometimes you can do something as an actor that you don't really know how to do, and it just *happens*. They gave me the bow and arrow and told me what to shoot at. I shot it right on target. One of the grips came up to me and said that he never knew I was interested in archery. I said I'm not. He said, 'But that was perfect. Do it again.' And I couldn't. All I did was get black and blue on my elbows. But I could do it in the scene."

As Lorna Gray and Adrian Booth, the actress worked under some of the most proficient serial makers. "James Horne, who directed *Deadwood Dick* and *Flying G-Men*, was marvelous. He was a sheer bundle of energy. 'Get it done' was his motto. Never mind what it's like, let's get it done. Tremendous energy. John English [*Captain America*] was rather sedate and quiet, a studious kind of person. Bill Witney was fun and charming. Outside of Joe Kane, Bill was my favorite director. He was considerate and kind and cared about the actor as well as the scene."

Lorna Gray's career suddenly ended in 1945 when the actress was arrested for smoking marijuana. The hour she spent in jail was the worst time of her life. In those days, any hint of scandal could utterly destroy a career. Republic Pictures, however, stood by their leading lady. Overnight, they wiped out the Lorna Gray identity and reincarnated the actress as Adrian Booth.

The supernatural came calling when Booth was cast opposite former Western star Bob Livingston in *Valley of the Zombies*, interesting in that it contained neither a valley nor zombies: The monster was a vampire. It turned out to be one of Booth's favorite roles.

"Phil Ford directed *Valley of the*

Veteran actor Lionel Atwill leaned on Booth's character with the help of dangerous-looking gunsel George J. Lewis in *Captain America*.

When he wasn't in his star-spangled Captain America costume, district attorney Grant Gardner (Dick Purcell) kept his enemies at pistol length, and so did his assistant, Gail Richards.

because he was a very nice young man. He would help me with my riding and I would help him with his acting.

"After we had finished the se[illegible] the studio wanted us to go on a p[illegible]sonal appearance tour to a small city in Arizona. That boy was so great in front

Zombies," she says, "and what I loved about that role was I got a chance to do some comedy. There were a couple of scenes that were kind of cute. Little tiny touches of comedy. That was fun to make. And Bob Livingston was just a darling man."

Her life was changed in 1949 when she went out to a friendly dinner with Western star Dale Robertson and met the man who would become her husband, actor David Brian. "Dale pointed

The blush of color was finally to grace Booth's cheeks when Republic's president, Herbert J. Yates, decided to make a cowboy star of bit player Monte Hale—in color; an almost unheard-of move on any B Western set. Even the exalted Roy Rogers unit was a year away from color footage. Booth's auburn hair was a natural for color film.

"My studio wanted to try out

him out to me and asked me if I wanted to meet him. I saw this blond giant and said, 'Of course!' David and I saw each other every day after that until we were married. And we were married for 42 years." Brian, who died in 1993, probably remains best known to fans as the evil millionaire of *The Immortal* TV se[illegible]

Trucolor," she states. "They explained to me that they wanted to experiment with Trucolor and they wanted me to do a series with Hale. This was an adventure for the studio as well as for us. As I recall, they had to avoid blue for some reason. Monte was very shy in front of the cameras and I would try to encourage him as much as I could,

of an audience. He wasn't shy at all the way he was in front of the cameras.

Between the Hale films, and before her retirement from the screen following 1951's *The Sea Hornet*, Adrian Booth was cast in some straight Republic productions. "My favorite scenes were in films like *Spoilers of the North* and *Rock Island Trail*, where you have an actor you respond to. I really always wanted to be a dramatic actress, but most of the time we didn't have time to really go into anything really dramatic. All of the movies I made were action pictures, so I seldom had a chance to do anything really dramatic.

"In *Spoilers of the North*, I played a half-breed Alaskan girl who was in love with Paul Kelly and extremely jealous. In a rage, I harpoon him at sea. They take him into a cabin which is off-limits to me, but I sneak in with a knife and I'm going to kill him because of my jealousy. The director, Richard Sale, who was also a writer, told me before we started the film that he wanted to concentrate on the drama in this, so in that scene with Paul, Dick Sale panned back and then as I've got the knife under Paul's chin, he panned in on my eyes which filled with tears, and you knew from my eyes that Paul Kelly had died. That's the best scene I *ever* did."

Serial Hero

By TOM WEAVER

Selected Photos: Courtesy Tom Weaver

Always in action, Walter Reed was a friend to both the Man of Steel & Ed Wood.

*He's the sort of actor that different sets of movie fans like to think of as "their own": Western fans remember Walter Reed best for his countless sagebrush roles, riding the range in frontier fare that went from low-budget TV shows (*The Lone Ranger, Hopalong Cassidy*) to John Ford Western classics (*How the West Was Won, Cheyenne Autumn*). But to serial buffs, he's the hero who kayoed the* Flying Disc Man from Mars *in a 12-round Republic serial, and contended with mysterious creatures from "inner Earth" in* Superman and the Mole-Men *(opposite his good friend George "Superman" Reeves). No less heroically, he battled voodoo cultists and deadly snakes in* Macumba Love.

The son of an Army officer, Reed (real name: Walter Reed Smith) was born in Washington and grew up in Honolulu and Los Angeles. After his parents' divorce, and during the darkest days of the Great Depression, the 17-year-old Reed decided to try acting as a career and made a two-week trip to New York (via hitched rides on railroad freight cars, amidst hoboes and tramps) to look for work on the stage.

The key to staying in demand as an actor, according to serial veteran Walter Reed: "Just cut the mustard!"

He worked in stock and on Broadway and, with an assist from actor Joel McCrea, broke into pictures in the early 1940s. A half-century and hundreds of roles later, Reed is a frequent film festival guest with many reminiscences of movie adventures on, off and under the Earth.

COMICS SCENE: Riding freight trains during the Depression, what are some of your memories of that?

WALTER REED: I got put on a chain gang in Longview, Texas! And I also remember "nickeling up" on guys. They would give me a nickel and I would go to a bakery at 5 a.m. and say, "Could I have some of yesterday's leavings?" The bakery guys would give me a big bag of the things they hadn't sold the day before—cinnamon rolls and stuff. I would hand the nickel over, acting like it was the last nickel I had, and they would say, "Oh, that's all right, kid." So, I kept the same nickel all the way across the country! And *that's* where I learned how to act, I think *[laughs]*—I would have my lip quivering as I put the nickel out!

CS: After you ended up in Hollywood under contract to RKO, your first film with a fantasy element to it was *Angel on the Amazon*.

REED: I made that *after* RKO. Vera Hruba Ralston was the star, playing this mysterious woman who, because of some terrible shock years and years before, *never aged*. George Brent played a pilot and I played his co-pilot. We were just *there*, me, Ross Elliott and Gus Schilling. Our plane went down in the jungle, and when our guarantee was up, they just *left* our characters there, dropped 'em and nobody ever ex-

Reed (second from left) appeared with his good friend, the original Superman, George Reeves in *Superman and the Mole Men*.

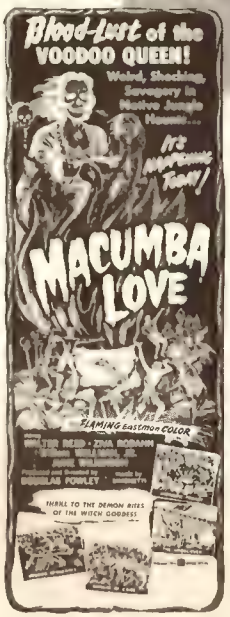
plained what happened to us [*laughs*]! To bring us back for a couple of scenes would have cost more money! That was at Republic, and they were *cheap* in those days! Vera couldn't act her way out of a paper bag, but she was a nice *person*. She was the girl friend of Herbert Yates, the president of Republic, and somebody warned me, "Don't get *too* friendly with Vera, because Yates has the place bugged!"

CS: What do you remember best about working in Republic serials?

REED: Well, they were *fast*! The serials we would do in 21 days. For instance, the director would say, "OK, now drive down the street in this car"—I drove all different kinds of old cars, because we had to match the old stock shots they were using [of car crashes, etc.]. I would drive away, drive quite a ways, then turn around and come back—and they would be gone! [*Laughs.*] They would have already gone on to the next set-up, and I couldn't *find* 'em! *That's* how fast they were shooting! We did 78 set-ups in one day—I hardly knew my leading ladies, all I had time to do was learn my lines. We did 22 pages a day, and on a feature, you're lucky if you do *two*!

CS: Any idea what made Republic think of you as a serial star?

REED: I honestly forget how I happened to get in there; it might have been because they had a lot of stock shots of Ralph Byrd in older serials. I was kind of heavyset like Ralph was, and from about 15 feet away, you couldn't tell whether it was me or Ralph. I'm not sure that's why I got cast, but it sure *helped*! Franklin Adreon was the associate producer of *Flying Disc Man from Mars* and a very sweet guy, and he said, "Walter, how would you like to do the *next* one?" I said *sure*, so I did two serials right in a row. And the funny part about it is, I've always thought that the only reason that they gave me the part in the next one [*Government Agents vs Phantom Legion*, 1951] was because they had already made two suits for me and two for my stunt double [*laughs*].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Weird, Shocking, Savagery in Native Jungle Hoodoo...
It's Awesome, Raw!
MACUMBA LOVE
FLAMING Eastmancolor
THRILL TO THE DEMON RITES OF THE WITCH GODDESS!

Macumba Love Copyright 1960 United Artists

Deadly snakes and voodoo figures threatened Reed—off screen!—during the making of *Macumba Love* in Brazil.

Rounding a new corner in his career, Reed (here with Harry Lauter) became a serial star with *Flying Disc Man from Mars*.

CS: Any memories of your *Flying Disc Man* leading lady, Lois Collier?

REED: Yes, I do remember Lois. She was nice. Her husband's the guy who imported *Godzilla* from Japan, and he made a bundle on those. The heavies in *Flying Disc Man* were Richard Irving and Harry Lauter. Dick Irving turned into a very big producer. He didn't want me to ever tell anybody about that serial! And Harry was a good friend.

CS: Did you get to know the stuntmen?

REED: Oh, sure. My double was a guy named Dale Van Sickel, and *he* wasn't a bad actor. Tom Steele [STARLOG #137] was another stuntman who worked the serials—and also Davey Sharpe, probably one of the best stuntmen who ever lived. Those three did all the stuff at Republic.

CS: Did *you* have to be in good shape to do a serial?

REED: Oh, boy, I'll say! You really had to get into condition, because you did stuff that you would *never* do in any other sort of picture. For instance, the scenes where you would jump out of a car just before it would crash. Davey Sharpe would be inside the car, out of sight, "blind-driving" it, and I would be

Reed (left) thinks he got the lead in his second serial, *Government Agents vs Phantom Legion*, because Republic made him two suits for his *first*.

Government Agents vs Phantom Legion: Copyright 1951 Republic Pictures

running alongside the car. I would step onto an apple box and leap off of it and roll down a hill, and from where the camera was positioned, it would look as if I had jumped out of the moving car. Well, the next day I had 30 ticks on my back, and they had to burn 'em all off! In one scene in *Flying Disc Man*, I'm hanging from one of the ties in a [soundstage] railroad trestle and I had to chin myself. Well, that's easier said than done—they asked me to do it about 10 times and, God, I wasn't in the condition an acrobat was in! After about the sixth, I couldn't do it anymore, and I said, "Dale, get in here and do a few chin-ups!"

CS: Then, once or twice a chapter, you were involved in fistfights.

REED: You would occasionally get hit during the fights—I got hit very little, and the only people that ever hit *me* were the other actors, *not* the stuntmen. That can happen very easily. You work out a routine, but you can make mistakes. On a *77 Sunset Strip*, Roger Smith tripped a little during a fight scene and I *cooled* him [*laughs*]! And *I've* been hit over the head with breakaway bottles that have knocked me out. Things happen.

CS: What else were you asked to do that was dangerous?

REED: I did something on *Flying Disc Man* that I didn't know was dangerous. They saw a train coming down the track and the director said, "Gee, we can get a quick shot." I was in a parachute and harness, and he said, "Open it and lay down on the ground next to the track, as though you've just landed next to a passing train." After we did it, the special FX man said, "You don't know how near you got to being killed." He told me that if the open chute had gotten sucked under the train and tangled around the wheels, I would have been dragged for *miles*!

CS: The director was Fred Brannon. Was he any good?

REED: He was *fast*. He used to be a prop man, and...he couldn't direct. He was a nice guy, but very *macho*. He thought he was a tough guy, and I had a little argument with him at the picture's start. He said, "Oh, New York *ac-tor*, come here...!" and I finally got him behind the set and I said, "Look, don't start buggin' me or I'll ram your head in the ground." After that, we got along fine [*laughs*]!

CS: Serials were a comedown for established actors.

REED: Oh, sure—anyway, as far as *I* was concerned, they were. One of my dear friends who lives up in San Francisco is Lyle Talbot—he's 92 now—and he and I both believe one thing: An actor's a *working* actor, and if you're not working, why, you're not an actor. We weren't people like Marlon Brando, who could hold out; *we* worked and worked—we were raising kids. I took almost anything that came along. And look at Lyle, *he* was in the worst picture ever made, *Plan 9 from Outer Space* for Eddie Wood [*laughs*]! But, you want to know something funny? We both *liked* Eddie—I lent Eddie 150 bucks for his rent one time! He was a nice guy and if he'd had money, he could have made something pretty good. (Lyle and I believe that—but nobody *else* does!)

CS: How did you happen to know Ed Wood? Through Lyle Talbot?

REED: No, I just happened to meet him one time and he wanted me to do a movie with Bela Lugosi. But he didn't have much money—"*much* money?" He didn't have *any* money! He wanted to get some stationery that looked good and he needed to pay his rent, and I gave him the money to do it. And I guarantee you, knowing Eddie, he would have paid me back if he had ever made it. But he just never made it.

CS: Did you bother to see either of your serials when they came out?

REED: No.

CS: Have you ever watched them on videotape?

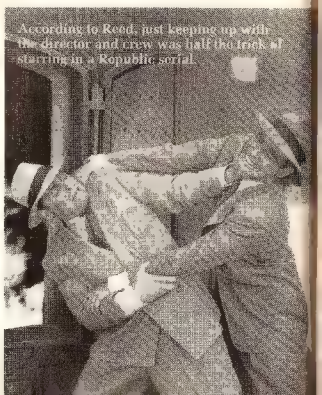
REED: Once! [*Laughs.*] I like the [*Flying Disc Man*] cliffhanger where I jump out of the plane, land in the bush, dust my suit off and I'm on my way! But, hey, the kids liked those things and those kids, when they see you, they know whether you're being phony or not. You have to respect the kids. I used to love the serials myself—I used to go see those things every Saturday afternoon. If the hero was doing it with tongue-in-cheek, he was wrong.

CS: Between your two serials, you co-starred in *Superman and the Mole-Men*. Any recollection of how you landed the part?

REED: I had done a Spic and Span commercial for Jessica Maxwell, the wife of [*Superman* producer] Bob Maxwell, so that's how I came to *his* attention. The director was Lee Sholem—I call him Bud. We went to school together, he was my brother's best man and my brother was *his* best man! The funny thing is, I saw him just *last week*, at a roast for Phyllis Diller, and that was the first time I've seen Bud in 40 years. He wasn't the greatest director in the world, but he knew his craft. He had been an editor and he was fast. He did his homework; he would have it all mapped out on the back of a [script] page, the movements he wanted to tell you about.

CS: How well did you know George Reeves?

REED: I had known George in the service, so we were old, dear friends and we knew each other very well. He was one of the nicest guys who ever lived. I knew him when he was married and then also later [after his divorce], when he was going around with Toni Mannix. George and I used to get together a lot, maybe once every two weeks; we would have dinner and a couple of



According to Reed, just keeping up with the director and crew was half the trick of starring in a Republic serial.

drinks; talk about old times and sit around tellin' lies to each other.

CS: Did Toni Mannix come along?

REED: Yes, she used to come to our house on Sundays with George. While we were at church one time, she cut my daughter's hair into bangs and my wife was furious [*laughs*]! It took eight months to get it back to where we wanted it! Toni was a nice gal, though—she was an ex-showgirl. She and her husband, [MGM executive] Eddie Mannix, had an understanding. He was hanky-pankying around with some nurse, and I'm sure Eddie knew about Toni and George.

CS: Both Phyllis Coates [Lois Lane] and Jack Larson [Jimmy Olsen] have said that, as the *Superman* series continued, Reeves was drinking more and more.

REED: I didn't know that he *ever* drank when he was working. *Phyllis* would know, but Jack was a prissy little kid. They've interviewed him a lot of times about George and *he* didn't know much about George. So, he worked with George, so what?—*he* didn't know George's private life. Phyllis he [Reeves] used to see a bit socially, but not Jack. Jack was always the juvenile—no matter *how* old he got, he still looked like a juvenile—but he turned into a pretty good writer.

CS: Was Reeves miffed that, after starting *Superman*, he couldn't get too many other roles?

REED: He *knew* that going into it. When he took that role, he talked to me and said, "Well, if I'm gonna put a propeller on my nose, I've gotta make *money*." He knew that it would be the last thing he would do, and it *was*—well, of course it was, because he *died*. But he'd have gone on and on and *on* in that thing, because *Superman* was always popular. Of course you know that George was in *Gone With the Wind* [1939], and he was a *very* good actor.

CS: When you worked with him, did he have a good attitude about playing Superman?

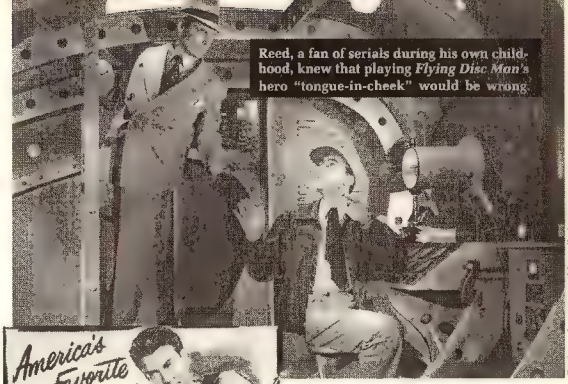
REED: Oh, he joked about it, for crying out loud. He played it seriously when he was doing it, but when we were off-screen, he could kid about it. He used to stay in shape by digging cesspools for people on weekends, for 100 bucks! With a shovel!

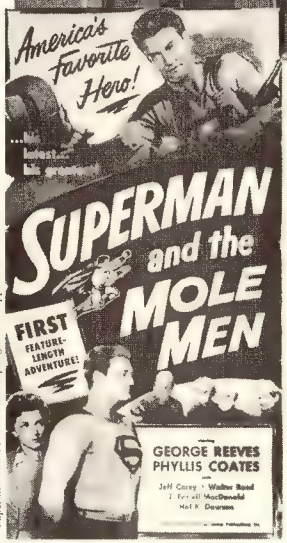
CS: During his *Süperman* days?

REED: Yeah! That's the way he would keep in shape!

CS: Do you remember who doubled for Reeves in his take-off "flying" scenes in *Mole-Men*? It looks like it might be Dale Van Sickel again.

REED: I don't remember. But the first day we worked on *Superman and the Mole-Men* (which was the first *Superman* that they did), we were out in Culver City and George was on top of this garage roof, and he was supposed to take off. They had him wired, and the thing broke. He fell on the ground from the top of the garage—it was a low garage, but he fell about 10 feet. And he got up and said, "That's the last time you *ever* fly me." And he never *did* fly again, he used a trampoline from then on. That's before the [special FX people] became experts.





Superman and the Mole Men. Copyright 1951 Lippert Pictures

Forty-five years after co-starring in *Superman and the Mole Men*, Reed has his own opinions about Man of Steel George Reeves' mystery death.

Design & Layout: Freddy Collado

CS: Do you believe that Reeves killed himself?

REED: No, I *don't* believe he committed suicide. Neither did his mother; neither did Damian O'Flynn, a very dear friend of ours. (Damian was in *Winged Victory* on stage with George and me.) George wasn't the type to commit suicide. George was going around with Toni Mannix, but then George met this *other* girl; he loved her, but he didn't *like* her. I haven't the slightest idea who she was, I never met her, but George dropped Toni for this new gal. I really was amazed, because George wasn't a deeply romantic guy. When he was going around with this girl, I don't think he wanted me to meet her, and so I didn't see him in the months just before he died. Somebody *killed* him, as far as *I'm* concerned; I don't know who.

CS: You were interviewed by the police after he died.

REED: Oh, yes, they talked to Damian and me. I told 'em that George had told *me* that he had $10,000 hidden in the house; I don't know if [his death] had anything to do with that. But I understand that George was pretty looped—a little snockered—when he went to bed that night. But, knowing George, he wouldn't have put that Luger to his head and shot his brains out, even if he *was* drunk. George never had a serious drinking problem; he drank pretty good *when he was off of work*, on a weekend or something. When he worked, he was *serious* about his work. Now, this business that he was drinking "more and more"—well, maybe he was, I wasn't there, I didn't see him for six months after he started going around with this new girl. I saw him once during that time, when he had his new house up in Benedict Canyon. And, by the way, there was a theory that he committed suicide because he was busted [broke]. That was a lot of baloney. George had money, he knew what he was doing financially.

CS: You were part of the Pine-Thomas stock company, you worked for Republic and on TV—but you also worked regularly in big pictures with some *great* directors.

REED: Well, I got into John Ford's stock company at the last. (I wish I had gotten in earlier!) I was in four of his last pictures and he liked me; I think if I had come along earlier, I would have gotten some big parts from him.

Selected Photos: Courtesy Dan Scapperotti Flying Disc Man From Mars: Copyright 1951 Republic Pictures

CS: What about starring in *Macumba Love*?

REED: I enjoyed doing that picture, I got a trip to Brazil out of it. Before we started, I went to the Screen Actors Guild and they said, "We can't be responsible for what goes on down there." So, I told [the moviemakers], "I want to be paid every Friday night in American Express traveler's checks." Which I was.

CS: How did you like working with all those snakes?

REED: The guy that was handling the snakes was named Juvenil. One day a little tiny snake jumped out from a tree so I stepped on it, killed it—it was only about a foot long. And he said, "If that snake had bit you, you would be dead within 30 seconds." It was one of the deadliest, most dangerous snakes down there! We worked with 30-foot anacondas, so it was...a little hairy! We would be in the bushes and Juvenil would be in there with us—he didn't speak a word of English. This snake that he was working with, this small anaconda, would bite him. He would take a drink of whiskey and then pour it on the bite. "Oh, he bites me all the time!" he said through the interpreter!

CS: How long were you in Brazil?

REED: About a month and a half—pretty long. They don't shoot very fast. Doug Fowley [the actor] directed it, and he was wonderful. We had a Hungarian cameraman, a Russian makeup guy (who was also an actor), and the crew was Brazilian. And there were real voodoo people in the movie! One guy came up to me and gave me this little figure that he had carved out of soapstone, and somebody said, "Oh, that's good luck." I said, "But it's *voodoo*!" And they said, "Look, there's *good* voodoo and bad voodoo. They like you!" I said, "Good! I'm gonna have them keep *on* liking me!"

CS: In the '60s, you started to slow down work-wise.

REED: I had a massive heart attack when I was 47. At that point, I said, "Hey, I had better watch myself," so I moved to Ventura, California. I continued to act, but I didn't take my career that seriously. I had made some money. And it's a funny thing: If a guy's a good actor, he can make money on the outside real easy. The secret is personality—know the right people, and they know how to deal with rich people and poor people. I sold a little real estate for a while.

My wife passed away about seven years ago. We were married for 51 years, and I miss the dickens out of her. I've been living alone since then. But I'm getting tired of cooking everything, so I'm moving to a retirement community where you have your own apartment, but they cook and provide maid service. I looked around when I was first there and I said, "God, these people look *old*," but then it occurred to me that *I'm* old, too [*laughs*]! The average age over there is about 75, and I'm 79!

CS: And you no longer act.

REED: The last thing I did was a picture in Arizona for [director] Budd Boetticher; I played the mayor of a town in *A Time for Dying* [1969] with Audie Murphy. I had been retired *then*, but Budd said to me, "Hey, come on down and do this thing." I did a lot of stuff for Budd—*Seven Men from Now* [1956], *Red Ball Express* [1952], *Horizons West* [1952], oh, a *lot*. I was kind of Budd's good luck charm. He still is going to do a picture in Spain (he's my age) and he wants me to come over. I said, "Budd, if you want me to say more than *hello*, you better have a teleprompter 'cause I can't remember lines anymore!" [*Laughs*.]

CS: What's the key to being in demand as an actor, as you were in your day?

REED: It's this simple: Just cut the mustard! I don't mean for that to sound conceited, I just mean that I had had 68 weeks of stock and I knew how to hack it out! I was no Brando, but I was pretty good. In other words, I really worked at my craft. There were a group of us who worked a lot, like Harry Lauter, Myron Healey, Lane Bradford, Dick Curtis and myself. We worked a lot of Westerns—*Gene Autrys*, *Buffalo Bill Jr.s*, *Annie Oakleys*, etc.—because they could *count* on us, *that* was the thing. It's like anything else: You have to do your apprenticeship if you want to be good.

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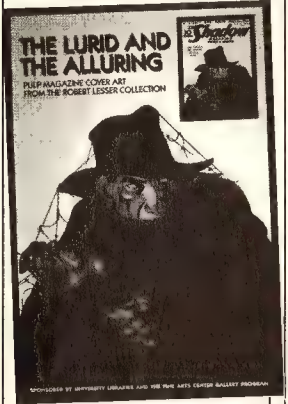

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Dredd

(continued from page 12)

Dredd," says Mills. "So, there is a funny sort of link. If you think back to the original *Death Race* movie poster image, it was a close-up of Frankenstein driving towards us. If you look at Frankenstein's helmet and then at Dredd's helmet, there *is* a similarity. It's not a rip-off, it's an influence, and Carlos would probably say it isn't even that. But I remember sending it to Carlos and saying, 'Give us something like Frankenstein from *Death Race 2000*,' and Carlos probably felt, 'Hah! I can do better than this!' And of course, he did! In a sense, there's a very tenuous link between the two!"

The link between *Judge Dredd* and *Death Race 2000* gets even stranger, as a close look at the casts will reveal. "Stallone was even in *Death Race 2000*—he was Machine Gun Joe!" Mills points out. "It's worth bearing in mind that when we started *2000 A.D.* and *Judge Dredd*, the two seminal influences on me were *Rollerball* and *Death Race 2000*. *Star Wars* hadn't hit the screens until *2000 A.D.* was very far advanced, but *Rollerball* and *Death Race 2000* came out six months to a year *before Star Wars*, and it was during that year that *2000 A.D.* was being created. So, *Death Race 2000* was a major influence on me, because I thought, 'If these guys can get away with it, so can I!' That was my attitude! And the humor in *Death Race 2000* really *does* confront or contradict something I said earlier. There's a film full of black humor that any British team would be utterly proud of, so I don't think we can be responsible for all of this black humor—maybe it started with you Americans in the first place, and it's coming back across the Atlantic! But, it was a strong influence on that idea of a really wild future, a future that isn't the carefully wrought and boring SF future of an Isaac Asimov or Arthur C. Clarke. I was never interested in those kind of stories. Harry Harrison maybe, but things like *Death Race 2000* seem to me to be what I want to do in SF comics. It has all gone full circle in a funny sort of way!"

With the blockbuster film approaching, Pat Mills admits it makes him feel good to be partly responsible for Judge Dredd. "I *am* pleased about it," he says, "But I'm kind of quietly pleased. I'm pleased for John Wagner, and I'm pleased that a character I had a large stake in developing, and one that came from a comic book I started, is going to end up as a big hit. I have a number of movie projects at very early stages myself, so I'm a little bit distracted by them. But, when *Judge Dredd* comes out, I shall probably bask in a little bit of reflected glory!"

Claremont

(continued from page 47)

tion, the first three issues of *S7* will be fully returnable. "We sat down and discussed the pros and cons, and the situation was decided by mutual agreement," says Claremont. "To me, that's as it should be—not that every creator will want to be involved in the editorial and business process, but the option exists—there is a venue and a mechanism to pursue that to the advantage of both. DC is investing a tremendous amount of capital and resources in publishing this book, and I'm investing my time and talent—my creative capital—and we each approach this with a fair element of risk, and so we both have an incentive to build on the foundation of our relationship to make it last, positively, as long as we are able. I'm encouraged to do my best work, and DC is encouraged to publish it with enthusiasm and excitement. I believe that there is a desire in the audience for good books done well, exciting books with interesting characters and kickass situations, the whole nine yards.

"If you're going to treat the audience with respect, it doesn't seem so outlandish to treat the creators and publishers and retailers with respect. We're all in this together. As companies themselves are forced to mature by changing circumstances, we come to the point where comics as an industry can evolve from a limited genre to a more fully textured aspect of publishing, which can present as fully-rounded and varied a selection of material to the reading public as prose publishing can. I see no reason why we can't do books for children, or adventure stories, Westerns, mysteries and suspense. We don't appear to have the opportunities to publish those types of stories and present them to a marketplace in a manner that will allow them to accept them eagerly. If they can do it in Europe and Japan, we can certainly give it a shot here. But, the function of that comes out of creators and publishers having a mutual stake in the material being published."

With his *X-Men* days packed away in the past, the revolutionary agreement that brought about *Sovereign Seven* has inspired Claremont to do some of his best work ever, he believes, and he's excited to be a full member of the DC team that will break new ground to make it succeed. "DC and I both have a tremendous stake in making *Sovereign Seven* work, because we all have something to lose!" explains Chris Claremont. "Here, there is a strong incentive to succeed—and play nice at the same time!"

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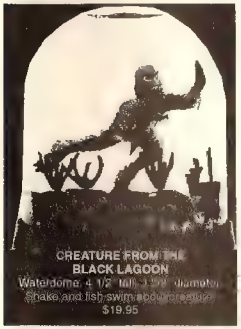

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Pocahontas

(continued from page 41)

"Our big CGI [computer generated imaging] scene is a storm at the movie's beginning, where the ship is rocking through big waves. We have a CGI ship, texture-mapped with hand-painted backgrounds, so it always looks like a background element, but it has dimension and weight and it's beautifully animated, with hand-drawn FX for ropes and sails. The ship is really our big element. The water is all hand-drawn, except for the final shot. We used some water that was already in the system for *Fantasia Continued*.

"They've been spending two years on the storm sequence alone. The detail is in league with *Pinocchio*'s Monstro scene, as far as beautiful hand-drawn effects. We blur it a little bit and it looks like mist. The water effects are stunning. You can't beat the hand-drawn stuff," Gabriel raves.

"Grandmother Willow has a CGI, three-dimensional trunk, but the face is hand-drawn and matched onto the CGI trunk. So it's as if you have a hollow in this treetrunk, into which you then animate the face, and put in 15 hand-drawn effects to make it look like it's texture-mapped like the background. We wanted to keep the warmth of character animation in the face and the expressions, but the CGI allows you to do willow reactions to what the face is doing. She can inhale or exhale or wilt a little bit, or whatever, and you're able to have the bark bit hanging on it. Just so we didn't have one entire color of the tree. You want to put a little bark texture on it."

After *Beauty & the Beast* proved that an animated film can contend for the Best Picture Oscar, Katzenberg wanted to shoot for the prize again with *Pocahontas*. "It's a great goal," Goldberg says, "but I have to admit, I'm *not* making a movie with that in mind. I honestly don't think any of us are. All we can do is make the best movie we can, and hope that people like it. If people like it and it does well, great. If it doesn't, that's fine, too. We have to take whatever kudos and brickbats we can get from that," he laughs.

"Jeffrey was involved a fair amount from the start of the project," Goldberg continues. "He felt very closely attached to this film. We were seeing him about twice a week before his departure, and we would constantly go over storyboards and scripts and make changes and improve and refine. The best thing I could say about working with Jeffrey was that he wouldn't necessarily come up with the best solutions for you, but he was very good at zeroing in on problem areas. He could look at something and say, 'That's not working because...' and then it was up to us to find out what ways to make it work. He had a good sense of what would play for an audience.

"Once Jeffrey left Disney, it didn't mean that we were rudderless. We all had a sense of what the film was and how to continue improving upon it, and we just continued making the film with, frankly, very little change in terms of our operating procedures.

"Everybody's their own worst critic. When we run the film for the crew at various stages of production, we'll always solicit their cards and comments in terms of what they feel is or isn't working. We would see how frequently a particular comment would come up in a problem area of the film. We would take those very seriously, because it would be a consistent note from a number of unrelated people. In that way, we were constantly monitoring ourselves to make the film as good as possible."

Gabriel is surprised to hear the possibility of a made-for-video prequel done by the TV division, covering the Indian Wars before John Smith arrived. This idea was proposed in early 1994, but the TV division has yet to approach the feature unit for their input.

"I think I would hear if they contacted one of the animators or story people," Gabriel surmises. "Tom Schumacher, Peter Schneider and Roy Disney would know about that. I have no idea. I would sort of expect *anything*. Disney has their fingers in all areas. I'm rooting for this to be on Broadway. It's made for the stage. The ice show might be a little tough," he laughs. "But they'll pull it off."

Goldberg's next project is *Hercules*, but not as a director. "I'm going back to animating," he reveals. "As much as this has been very rewarding, I miss being on the boards. I miss animating. I enjoyed working with John Musker and Ron Clements on *Aladdin*, and they're going to be directing *Hercules*, and that's really the reason.

"I'm going to be the supervising animator for the character of Phil, Hades' sidekick. That should be fun," declares Eric Goldberg. "I'm just itching to draw again."

Though he's contracted for a few years at Disney, Mike Gabriel is uncertain about his next film, but he mentions the possibility of a project recently transferred over from Disney TV Animation: the classic Edgar Rice Burroughs novel of the definitive jungle hero, *Tarzan of the Apes*.

Will it be a musical?

"Definitely." CS

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Animation Scene

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In Like a Lion

Reign of the Lion King: It only took two weeks of release for *The Lion King* to become the number-one-selling video of all time. Released on February 28, it sold 20 million copies in six days. After two weeks, it surpassed 26 million units, generating some $450 million. By comparison, as of March 21, the 32-week theatrical run has grossed more than $312.8 million domestically.

The laserdisc release is set for September 19. The 88-minute CLV version will retail for $29.98. The CAV Deluxe Edition will have a wider letterboxed format (1:85:1 ratio) than *Aladdin* and *Beauty & the Beast*, and will include *The Making of The Lion King*, bonus programming and a portfolio of six lithographs of conceptual art, all for $99.98.

Disney has announced the video is a limited release, but declined to specify a deadline. As of April, Disney stopped taking orders for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, with more than 24 million copies sold.

Andres Deja will *not* be joining DreamWorks SKG as previously mentioned. Instead, he'll be animating on Disney's *Hercules*.

Space Ghost Grills the Guests: Production continues on *Space Ghost: Coast-to-Coast* with more guests announced: Hulk Hogan, Alice Cooper, Michael Stipe from R.E.M., David Byrne, Sandra Bernhard, Fran Leibowitz, Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth and Lassie. *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening will appear as well, after making the request through America Online.

Though the third season began in April, new episodes will appear sporadically throughout the year.

The New Adventures of Felix the Cat will be seen this fall on CBS, with a full 13-episode commitment for Film Roman. Layouts will be done at the studio—a step not usually taken for Saturday morning shows—which will allow for tighter quality control. *Felix* is designed by producer Timothy Bergland and senior designer Michael Deiderich. Jim Wyatt is production manager; Damon Yoches is production assistant; executive producers are Phil Roman and Don Oriolo. The writers are Martin Olson and Jeremy Kramer. The series will be produced by four units, directed by Lynn Naylor, Milton Knight, Dominic Polcino and Robin Steele. The overseas production company is Rough Draft, which does *The Simpsons* and *The Critic*. *Felix* will air at 11 a.m. EST—a time slot frequently preempted by sports on CBS.

"Gary Larson meets *The Last Picture Show*": That's how Klasky Csupo describes their first Saturday-morning series, *Santo Bugito*. It stars a group of colorful insects in the border town of Santo Bugito, Texas. The "Latin-flavored" series features original and adapted music—scored to picture as in the classic Looney Tunes—by Devo member Mark Mothersbaugh, who has also composed for *Rugrats* and MTV's *Liquid Television*. Voices include George Kennedy, Joan Van Ark, Charlie Adler and Henry Gibson. Creator Arlene Klasky is executive producer with Gabor Csupo; the producer is Bob Hathcock. *Santo Bugito* is the first series owned by the studio, which makes *Rugrats* and *Aaahh! Real Monsters* for Nickelodeon and *Duckman* for Paramount. The studio boasts that *Santo Bugito* is "creator-driven" and *not* a pre-sold property.

Thirteen half-hour episodes will air at 11:30 a.m. EST on CBS beginning this fall. Pending sports interruptions, that is.

Eek! Gets *Klutter*ed: This fall, *Eek-stravaganza* will have a new segment: *Klutter*, which replaces *The Terrible Thunderlizards*. Though Nelvana produces *Eek! the Cat*, *Klutter* will be done by Film Roman, because the show's creator, Savage Steve Holland, wanted to co-produce it with *Simpsons* supervising director David Silverman. The creative staff includes director Brian Sheesley, character designer Eric Keyes, background designer Edgar Duncan and prop designer Shaun Edberg. Rough Draft Studios is handling the overseas animation.

Klutter is an under-the-bed monster (like Mr. Bumpy on ABC) composed of objects kids throw down there. He was created by the kids of the Heap family because their father was allergic to any kind of real pet. Fox has ordered eight 11-minute segments.

More From Film Roman: *Bobby's World* has been renewed for this fall with eight new half-hours, bringing the total to 68 episodes on the Fox afternoon. The late John Candy's children will voice some of Bobby Generic's classmates in the episode "Bobby the Genius." Male model Fabio will play himself in the live-action segment of "Hooked on Caps," and be caricatured and star as "Rubio" in "Just Plain Sleepless," as host of a radio romance show. Bobby's creator and voice, Howie Mandel, has written five new songs for the show this season.

ABC has cancelled *Cro*, the "FCC-friendly" show meant to educate youngsters. The series lasted two seasons, starring Jim Cummings as Phil D., a friendly Ice Age mammoth who helps Cro (Max Casella), an 11-year-old Cro Magnon boy learn about science. Based on the book *The Way Things Work* by David Macaulay and developed/story edited/voice-directed by Mark Zaslove, *Cro* was sponsored by the Children's Television Work-

Space Ghost Art: Copyright 1994 Cartoon Network, Inc.

For the second season of *Space Ghost: Coast-to-Coast*, the masked wonder has some pretty hip guests—Michael Stipe, Alice Cooper and Matt Groening.

shop with partial funding by the National Science Foundation.

Republic Pictures CTW Home Video has three cassettes available, with two first-season episodes per tape. *It's a Woolly, Woolly World* has "No Way Up" and "Escape from Mung Island." *Adventures in Woolyville* features the pilot, "Lever in a Million Years" and "Play It Again Cro...Not." *Have Mammoths Will Travel* has "Pulley for You" and "A Bridge Too Short." The hour-long tapes are priced at an affordable $9.98 each.

After seven seasons and 121 episodes, CBS decided not to renew its option on *Garfield and Friends*.

The Pagemaster Meets the Power Rangers: On home video, that is. A four-minute preview of *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers: The Movie* is featured on the April video release of *The Pagemaster*, backed by a $7 million ad campaign. The Fox feature grossed $12,767,000 in four weeks.

The Pagemaster stars Macaulay Culkin as Richard Tyler, a timid boy who seeks refuge in a library during a storm (in live-action sequences directed by *The Rocketeer*'s Joe Johnston). He enters a cartoon universe where he confronts the movie versions of literary villains such as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Moby Dick, Long John Silver and a fire-breathing dragon. The movie features the voices of *Star Trek* alumni Whoopi Goldberg (Fantasy), Patrick

Art: Copyright 1994 Buena Vista Television

Aladdin and his Princess Jasmine fly into new animated adventures on CBS.

Stewart (Adventure), Frank Welker (Horror), Leonard Nimoy (Dr. Jekyll) and Christopher Lloyd as The Pagemaster. The 76-minute feature retails for $22.98 ($24.98 Canada). A $5 rebate is available if you buy one of three FoxVideo titles: *Baby's Day Out*, *FernGully* or *Once Upon A Forest*

The Brave Little Toaster's Adventures continue in two OVA (Original Video Animation) sequels: *The Brave Little Toaster Goes to Mars* and *The Brave Little Toaster Goes to School*. The $3 million videos are being produced by Hyperion in conjunction with Kushner-Locke for Buena Vista Home Video, to be released summer 1996.

The Princess Collection is Disney Home Video's newest line, launched April 7. *Aladdin*'s Jasmine is spotlighted in two volumes: *The Greatest Treasure* with two episodes, the ecologically correct "Garden of Evil" and "Elemental My Dear Jasmine," and a gold-tone necklace with a cloisonné charm of Jasmine. *Jasmine's Wish* has "Do the Rat Thing" and "Bad Moon Rising," plus a gold-tone bracelet with a cloisonné charm of the Genie.

The Little Mermaid's Ariel stars in *Wish Upon a Starfish*, which includes that episode and "Metal Fish," plus a gold-tone necklace with a cloisonné charm of Ariel. *Giggles* contains that episode and "Against the Tide," plus a gold-tone bracelet with a cloisonné charm of Flounder. The videos are priced at $12.99 each. They don't use the openings from the TV series.

A *Pocahontas Sing-Along* video is scheduled for July 18 release, featuring the movie's "Colors of the Wind."

Disney TV Update: CBS has cancelled *The Little Mermaid* after 30 episodes (the prime-time special, 13 first season, eight second season, eight third season episodes). There are no plans for an OVA at this time.

Otherwise, CBS has ordered eight new episodes of *Aladdin* for the show's second season. Thirteen were made for the network's first season, plus 65 exclusively for the Disney Afternoon. A second OVA sequel, *Aladdin and the King of Thieves*, is in production. Targeted for 1996 release, it will chronicle Aladdin meeting his father and finally marrying Princess Jasmine.

Timon and Pumbaa will have 12 half-hour shows for CBS, 13 for the Disney Afternoon. Each half-hour has two 11-minute segments. Two episodes will feature the adult Simba, two spotlight "Rafiki's Fables" and at least two episodes include the hyenas.

Second season guests on *Gargoyles* will include Cree Summer, Peter Scolari, Robert Culp and Jim Belushi.

So, You Want to be in Cartoons? You're in luck. The third edition of *Cartoon Animation: Introduction to a Career* has been published with updated material by Milton Gray, longtime animation veteran and one

ANIMEIGO *ANIME*: On May 24, AnimEigo Inc. issues its first simultaneous subtitled, dubbed and laserdisc release *Baoh*, about a genetically engineered parasite that makes its host organism nearly indestructible. This parasite is developed by Doress, an organization of wanna-be world rulers. The 50-minute adventure has graphic violence and is intended for mature audiences. The subtitled version retails for $24.95; dubbed is $19.95. A hybrid laserdisc edition has side one subtitled, and a bilingual soundtrack (Japanese or English) on side two. Retail is $44.95

Bubblegum Crisis—cyberchicks with attitude...and firearms.

All eight volumes of the popular *Bubblegum Crisis* series are available in a "Bubble Dub Gum Pack" for $140. Purchased separately, dubbed tapes cost $19.95 each at two episodes per tape, with subtitled copies at $24.95. Laserdisc copies are $39.95. LD1 contains episodes #1-3; LD2 has #4 and both Hurricane Live music videos; LD3 has #5-6; LD4 has #7-8. In Mega-Tokyo of A.D. 2032, a band of female hi-tech mercenaries battle the evil GENOM Corporation and its "Boomer" androids. It's for those who like swearing, tough women, sex, violence and rock 'n' roll!

AnimEigo distributes a line called New Market Sales, which in April released a live-action documentary called *A Pipeline...and Animals!*, a "whimsical look" at wildlife along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. It's narrated by Mel Blanc. The 28-minute video sells for $19.95.

All Anime Art: Copyright 1995 AnimEigo, Inc

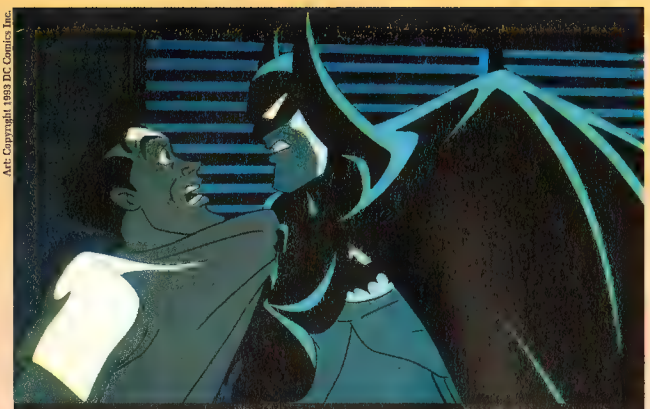
Guess who gets the girl but loses his pants? The super-thief Rupan III.

Apparently, AnimEigo acquired the rights to two Lupin III features, only they're calling him "Rupan III." These features are *The Fuma Conspiracy* (73 minutes) and *Legend of the Gold of Babylon* (100 minutes). *Fuma* is dubbed at $19.95; subtitled at $24.95, with a subtitled laserdisc costing $39.95. *Legend* is subtitled only at $24.95; laserdisc, $39.95.

Urusei Yatsura (a.k.a. *Those Obnoxious Aliens*) fans will be delighted to know that as of May 1, AnimEigo has dropped the retail price of all *UY* titles to $24.95 and five laserdisc titles to $39.95. The latest release, Volume 16, contains episodes 59 through 62. It's 100 minutes and subtitled

A race of aliens called the Oni come to repossess Earth, unless a randomly selected champion can defeat their Princess Lum in a game of tag. The champion is Ataru Moroboshi, who happens to be "a lecherous lad whose lack of luck is legendary." For a hefty $540, you can buy a *Urusei Yatsura Whack Pack* which contains *UY* TV Volumes 1 through 16, *UY* OVAs 1 through 6 as well as *UY* movies 1 and 3 through 6. A *UY Yum Lum LD Set* contains one laserdisc each of the movies 1 and 3 through 6 for $150.

Art: Copyright 1993 DC Comics Inc.



BATMAN'S VIDEO CRUSADES: This June, Warner Home Video will unleash four volumes of *The Adventures of Batman and Robin*, in time to tie in with *Batman Forever*. Each $12.95 cassette will have two episodes. They are: "Robin's Reckoning," Parts I (Primetime Emmy Winner) and II; The Riddler in "If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Rich?" and "Riddler's Reform"; Two-Face and Batgirl in "Shadow of the Bat," Parts I and II; and the Joker in "Christmas with the Joker," and "The Laughing Fish."

of the directors on *The Simpsons*. Included are the latest Screen Cartoonists Union wage scales, from 1993 1996, which reveal the standard wage for each job classification.

Half the book is written for the beginner who wants to break into the business. It discusses how to learn the fastest, easiest way to animate, and how to look for work, particularly in Hollywood. The second half with chapters on writing, directing and producing—addresses how to advance up the ladder in the business. And Gray is frank about the attitude Hollywood studios have toward animation, making revelations not known to the public or even to cartoon buffs.

The book contains updated information based on conditions that didn't exist in 1991, when the book's first edition was published. "At that time, the home video market wasn't big enough to easily support animated product, particularly product made exclusively for home video," Gray says. "Also, computers were nowhere near as close to being available to independent filmmakers as a tool, to help them make films economically. Now computers are more affordable, and the home video market has made it more possible for an independent filmmaker to reach his potential audience directly. Cartoon filmmaking is evolving into something very similar to self-publishing."

Cartoon Animation is published by Lion's Den, distributed by Samuel French. The 124-page softbound book retails for $12.95.

U.S. Manga Corps has a Lot of Gall: Gall Force, that is. *Gall Force: Earth Chapter Pack* is available at $74.95 for the three-volume set, subtitled. Purchased separately, the 58-minute cassettes retail for $29.95. It's the "ultimate" battle of woman vs. machine. If only they could spell "gal" correctly.

Akai Hayate, Volume 1 is a supernatural martial arts drama that retails for $29.95, 60 minutes, subtitled.

U.S. Manga Corps (not to be confused with Manga Video Entertainment) has a slew of new CLV laserdiscs as well: *RG Veda, Part 2*, subtitled, 60 minutes, $34.95. *The Heroic Legend of Arislan, Part 2*, dubbed and subtitled with both Japanese and English soundtracks, 60 minutes, $34.99. *Project A-ko 3: Cinderella Rhapsody*, dubbed and subtitled, 50 minutes for $34.99. *Hades Project Zeorymer*, Volume 1 and 2 are subtitled, 60 minutes and $34.99 apiece.

The exciting but depressing *Gall Force 3: Stardust War* is subtitled, 60 minutes for $34.99. *A Wind Named Amnesia* is subtitled, 80 minutes for $39.99. *Detonator Orgun, Part 1* is subtitled, 57 minutes for $34.95. *Iczer 3*, Volume 1 is subtitled, 60 minutes, $34.99. *Project A-ko: Final* is dubbed and subtitled, 59 minutes for $34.99. *Genocyber 2 & 3: Vajranoid Showdown* is subtitled, 50 minutes and *Genocyber 4 & 5: The Legend of Ark De Grande* is subtitled, 60 minutes both retail for $34.99.

Video Comics From Orion: On May 30, Orion Home Video is releasing its third wave of Streamline Pictures imports: the first two volumes of *Doomed Megalopolis* and all four volumes of *Crying Freeman*. All six dubbed videos happen to be 50 minutes in length, and retail for $19.98. Not for the squeamish.

The Return of *Orguss*: It has been 200 years since the time/space collapse from the original *Orguss* series. A war is about to erupt between the countries of Rivilia and Zafrin. Both hurry to excavate the battle *mecha* from the previous centuries, called "Decimators." Embroiled in the conflict is a lad named Lean, forced to join the military to pay off a mortgage.

Orguss 02 is a three-volume OVA series imported by Manga Entertainment and dubbed by L.A. Hero. Each volume is $14.95, with two episodes per volume (60 minutes). Volume One came out in March; Volume Two is slated for June and Volume Three, September.

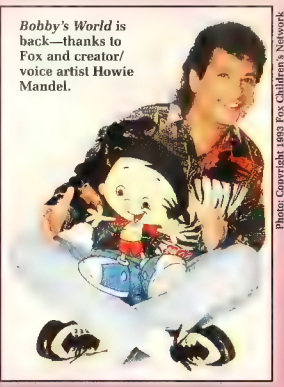
It's a bloodier, more cynical story than the original 36-episode TV series, but the characters are designed by the same artist, Haruhiki Mikimoto. The direction/original story is by Fumihiko Takayman; screenplay is by Mayori Sokimimi, Hiroshi Yamaguchi and Yuji Kishino, and art direction is by Shichirou Kobayashi. The producers are Bandai Visual/Big West/Mainichi Broadcasting System/ Shogakukan

That Old Black Magic: Manga has also released the dubbed version of *Black Magic M-66*. Released in Japan in 1987, this 48-minute OVA served as an inspiration for the "Heart of Steel" episodes of *Batman: The Animated Series*. The military loses control of two top secret M-66 android assassins, one of which is programmed to attack Ferris, the granddaughter of its creator. Sybel, a freelance video journalist, has to track Ferris before the 'droids finish her.

Black Magic M-66 is created, storyboarded and written by Masamune Shirow, the creator of *Appleseed* and *The New Dominion Tank Police* (a.k.a.

Crying Art: Copyright 1994 Streamline Enterprises, Inc.

For all you fans of adult animation, *Crying Freeman* comes your way from Streamline Pictures.



***Bobby's World* is back—thanks to Fox and creator/ voice artist Howie Mandel.**

Photo: Copyright 1993 Fox Children's Network

The manic maestro is back with the *Carl Stalling Project*, Volume 2.

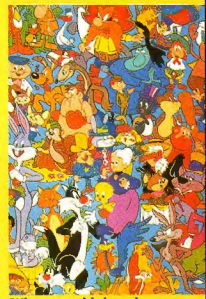
THE CARL STALLING PROJECT, VOLUME 2 was released March 1 on CD, retailing for $15.99. Produced by Greg Ford and Hal Willner, this edition features more music by the great Warner Bros. composer, with selections from 1939 to 1957.

Whereas the first volume had more blown "takes" and banter among the orchestra members, vocals and sound effects, this second edition emphasizes full scores of original Stalling music, with fewer "quotes" from other music.

"Our endorsement of a particular score doesn't necessarily extend to an endorsement of the film," says Ford. "Although Robert McKimson's 'Mouse-Taken Identity' [1957] is a not-so-hot picture in itself, it turns out that, once the dialogue and sound FX were stripped away, the score yields probably the most beautiful articulation of Stalling's 'Hopping Kangaroo' theme from McKimson's *entire* 'Hippety Hopper' series."

Highlights of Volume 2 include the Bad Swiss Band from "Piker's Peak" (1957), Tex Avery laughing as the Big Ghost from "Ghost Wanted" (1940), "Marching Pink Elephants" from "Calling Dr. Porky" (1940), "unorthodoxly timed, sarcastic mock-fanfares" during the Coyote's slipping and sliding in Acme axle grease in "Guided Muscle" (1955), and a three-second cue of kangaroo bounces.

Says Ford, "We're hoping for an enthusiastic response to this so we don't have to wait another five years to come out with a *Carl Stalling Project*, Volume 3, which will primarily focus on the great vocals done by Mel Blanc and others for the WB cartoons."



Where would these looney tunes be without their merrie melodies?

WB Characters: Copyright 1995 Warner Bros.

writers, and the *Animage* Award for Best Picture by the editors of *Animage* magazine.

Last year, *Honneamise* was redubbed by Manga Entertainment, Inc. in association with Hero Co., Ltd. and Animaze—a more faithful translation supervised by Shigeru Watanabe, the film's executive producer. Tara Releasing distributed this version theatrically from November 1994 to May 1995. This June, Manga is releasing the video for $19.95 dubbed, $24.95 subtitled. The film is unrated, but it does contain brief frontal nudity during a rape attempt—by the *hero*!

The Oops Department: There's a blooper during the "Circle of Life" opening in *The Lion King*. As Zazu flies toward Pride Rock, look at the lower left of the screen. The animals, who are supposed to be looking up at Mufasa, are instead looking toward the horizon, away from Pride Rock!

Who's Your Favorite 'Toon? Last summer, the Cartoon Network encouraged viewers to write to their favorite toon star. The Flintstones led the way with 1,891 letters, followed by 1,067 letters for Space Ghost, 486 for The Jetsons, 259 for Bugs Bunny and 255 for Secret Squirrel.

Here's a sample of the mail:

"Dear Fred [Flintstone]: Do you ever wear pants? Why not?—Sophie."

"Dear Space Ghost: How hot does your heat ray get when you fire, that's one hot master blaster. Signed, Frank."

"Dear Bugs Bunny: You're the cutest toon in the world. Did the Lion King ever get on your nerves? Love, T."

"Dear Space Ghost: You're so cute. You have like those huge muscles. Do you have a girl friend? [Two lipstick smudges], Megan."

"Dear Top Cat: I will send you a million dollars. Do you want it and give have [half] to Mr. Dibble and would you like it I don't really know now if you want it. From, Jeremy H."

"Dear Papa Smurf: Why are Smurfs blue?—Amber."

"Dear Fred: Have you ever considered a new hairstyle, something original? Sincerely, Matt."

"Dear Secret Squirrel: If you [are] a secret agent, why don't you wear regular [clothes] to blend in? From Matt M."

"Dear Yogi: How do you eat so much? Why don't you just go to the store instead of trying to steal picnic baskets? From, Elizabeth."

Used to wonder about that myself.

—*Bob Miller*

Dominion II). Character and production design is by Hiroyuki Kitakubo. Shirow and Kitakubo co-directed. The producers are Bandai Visual/Movic/Masamune Shirow/Seishinsha. The video is $14.95.

You Will Believe A Man Can Fly: What if the events of *The Right Stuff* happened on another planet? That's the question answered in *The Wings of Honneamise: Royal Space Force*. The hero, Shirotsugh "Shiro" Lhadatt (Robert Matthews), is a listless underachiever in the Royal Space Force. A lovely religious zealot, Riquinni Nonderaiko (Melody Lee), motivates him to become the world's first astronaut, and he eventually becomes a national hero. The neighboring Republic Government tries to stop the fledgling space program by sabotaging the rocket's construction, sending an assassin after Shiro, and in the climax, attacking the launch site.

The 120-minute Japanese feature was based on a short story by director Hiroyuki Yamaga, *Honneamise no Tsubasa: Oritsu Uchugun*. To find a sponsor for the feature, 24-year-old Yamaga formed the Gainax (it means "big" in the Sanin dialect) Production Company to produce a four-minute short. He submitted the short to Makoto Yamashina of the Bandai Company, Japan's largest toy manufacturer. Impressed, Yamashina approved a budget of over eight billion yen.

More than 3000 animation artists worked on the film. Just as Disney sends its key production staff on field trips for its animated features, so too did Gainax. They studied aircraft design, space hardware and launch footage at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C., attended a *Discovery* space shuttle launch and studied Post-Modern architecture in New York City. They applied their research to a thoroughly detailed fictional world. The ground battle, aerial fight and rocket launch at the film's climax make brilliant use of rotoscoping and advanced computer-generated imagery.

Character designer Yoshiyuki Sadamoto based his designs on American film stars such as Treat Williams for the hero, Shiro Lhadatt; Harrison Ford for Shiro's best friend Matti; and Tatum O'Neal for the child Manna. The otherworldly soundtrack is by Oscar-winning composer Ryuichi Sakamoto (*The Last Emperor* and *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence*).

Although *Honneamise* was released in Japan in March 1987, an English-dubbed version, *StarQuest*, premiered almost a month earlier in the U.S. at Mann's Chinese Theater. This version, by Go East Enterprises, was poorly-translated, badly dubbed and Anglicized the names of the cast ("Randy Wilson" instead of "Shirotsugh Lhadatt"). *Star Quest* has not had an official screening since then.

Art: Copyright 1995 AnimEigo, Inc.

Japanese animation is coming back in a big way thanks to companies like U.S. Manga Corps, Manga Entertainment and *Urusei Yatsura*'s home, AnimEigo.

In 1987, *Honneamise* won the Japan *Anime* Award for Best Picture, the *Seiun* Award for Best Picture by Japanese SF

Mask Art: Copyright 1995 New Line Productions, Inc.

COMICS screen

All of these projects are live-action unless specified. Those boxed are new or updated since last listing. **Not everything listed will ultimately ever be made.** S: script; D: director; P: producer; EP: executive producer; C: creator; AN: animated; LA: live-action; Syn: syndicated; HB: Hanna-Barbera; Nel: Nelvana; WD: Disney; WB: Warner Bros.; PP: Paramount; U: Universal; Col: Columbia; Am: Amblin; DH: Dark Horse; FR: Film Roman; QDE: Quincy Davis Entertainment. **Attn. all pros:** Info to be added to this list is cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016. (Info as of 4/5/95)

Accident Man. Film. S: Pat Mills, Tony Skinner.

❑ **Adventure Man.** AN. WB. WB Kids' Network.

Aeon Flux. MTV. AN half-hour. 10 episodes.

The Airtight Garage. AN. EP: Kurosawa Ent. P: Philippe Rivier. D: Moebius, Katsuhiro Otomo. S: Randy Lofficier.

Animaniacs. Moves to WB Kids' Network this fall.

Annie & the Tomorrow Team. AN. TV project. Fremantle.

Archie. Film. DIC.

The Badger. Film/TV. PP.

Barbarella. Film. Nel.

Barb Wire. Film. V/DH. Possibly w/Pam Anderson.

❑ **Batman Forever.** Sequel. (see article)

Beavis and Butt-head. AN film. Geffen Films. S: Mike Judge.

Betty Boop. AN film. S: Jerry Rees. EP: R. Fleischer, R. Zanuck.

Biker Mice from Mars. Film. P: Al Ruddy, Andre Morgan, David Chan. S: Greg Johnson.

Blade. S: David S. Goyer. D: Ernest Dickerson.

❑ **Casper.** Film. (see article)

Catwoman. Film. WB. S: Dan Waters.

Cisco Kid. TV movie sequel. W/Jimmy Smits, Cheech Marin. D: Luis Valdez. S: David Taylor. TNT.

❑ **The Crow.** Film sequel. D: Tim Pope.

Crying Freeman. Film. D: C. Gans. W/M. Dacascos, Rae Dawn Chong.

❑ **Cyberforce.** AN. Pilot. Fox. Graz Ent.

Daredevil. Film. Fox. D: Carlo Carlei. S: Carlei, Chris Columbus. P: Ben Myron, Tony Ludwig, Alan Riche.

❑ **Dennis the Menace.** Sequel. S: Jeff Schechter.

Dr. Strange. Film. S: David S. Goyer. Col.

Donkey Kong Country. AN series. Nel.

Doom's IV. Film. P/S: Rob Liefeld. Am.

Dudley Do-Right. Film. U.

Dungeons & Dragons. Film. Sweetpea Ent. S: Topper Lilien & Carroll Cartwright.

Elektra Assassin. Film.

Elfquest. AN film. P: Ed Pressman, Jeremy Chechik.

Fantastic Four. Film. D: Chris Columbus.

Faust. Film. D: Stuart Gordon. S: David Quinn.

❑ **Felix the Cat.** AN series. FR. CBS.

Fist of the North Star. Film. D: Tony Randel. W/Gary Daniels, Costas Mandylor.

Flash Gordon. Film. S: David S. Goyer. P: Peter Guber.

Freakazoid. AN series. WB/Am. P: Bruce Timm, Paul Dini.

❑ **From Hell.** Film. Touchstone.

❑ **Gen 13.** AN Film. D: Kevin Altieri. Wildstorm Prods.

Ghost Rider. Film. S: David S. Goyer. Savoy.

Gothik. Film. P: Jeff Most.

Green Hornet. Film. U.

Grimjack. Film.

Hate. AN Film. S: Peter Bagge. Colossal Pictures.

Hopalong Cassidy. Film. S: John Milius.

Incredible Hulk. Film. U. P: Gale Anne Hurd. S: John Turman.

Inspector Gadget. Film. S: J. Loeb III, M. Weisman. U.

Jonny Quest. AN & LA films. S: Fred Dekker. New AN series.

Judge Dredd. Film. WD: Danny Cannon. June bow.

Kull. Film. U. S: C. Pogue.

Lt. Blueberry. Film.

Little Lulu. AN. Lulu: Tracey Ullman.

❑ **Luke Cage.** Film. D (&P): John Singleton. S: John Doughrity. P: Ed Pressman.

Machine. Film. P: Larry Gordon. DH. U.

The Mask. AN series. FR. CBS.

❑ **Mega Man.** AN syn series. 13 new episodes commissioned.

❑ **The Men in Black.** Film. Col/Am. W/Tommy Lee Jones. D: Barry Sonnenfeld.

Mickey Mouse. New AN theatrical shorts. WD.

Mighty Morphin Power Rangers. Film. D: Bryan Spicer. Summer release.

Mr. Magoo. Film. Am/WB.

Modesty Blaise. Film. Miramax. P: Marcelo Anciano, Michael Berrow.

❑ **Mortal Kombat.** Film. P: Larry Kasanoff. D: Paul Anderson. August debut.

❑ **Mutant Chronicles.** Film. P: Ed Pressman. S: Philip Eisner.

NeverEnding Story. AN. Nel.

Nexus. AN film. HB.

Peanuts. Film. P/S: John Hughes. WB.

The Phantom. Film. PP.

Pinky & the Brain. AN series. WB/Am. WB Kids' Network.

Pit Bulls. Film. P: Larry Gordon. DH. U.

Plastic Man. Film. WB/Am.

❑ **Pocahontas.** AN film. WD. (see article)

Prince Valiant. Film. S: M. Beckner, Roger Kumble, Marlene King. N. Constantin.

❑ **Prophet.** Film. Tristar. P: Rob Liefeld.

The Rocky Horror Show. AN series. Nel.

The Saint. Film. PP.

Sandman. Film. S: Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio. P: Oren Koules, Alan Riche.

Sand Sharks. AN series. DIC.

Sgt. Rock. Film. P: Joel Silver. S/D: John Milius. WB.

Sheena. TV series. Col.

Silver Surfer. Film. S: John Turman. Neue Constantin.

Sin City. S: Frank Miller.

Speed Racer. Film. S: J.J. Abrams. WB.

Spider-Man. LA film.

The Spirit. LA & AN projects. P: Michael Uslan, Ben Melniker.

Spy vs. Spy. Film. S: Gene Quintano. P: Steven Tisch, QDE.

Stretch Armstrong. Film. D: William Dear. S: Mike Werb, Michael Colleary.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles IV. Film. New Line.

Terry & the Pirates. TV. Syn. Fall 1995.

Vampirella. Film.

V for Vendetta. Film. S: Hilary Henkin. D: Brett Leonard. P: Joel Silver. WB.

Virus. Film. DH. S: Chuck Pfarrer. P: Gale Anne Hurd. U.

X. Film. DH. U.

X-Men. Film. Fox. P: Lauren Shuler-Donner. S: Andrew Kevin Walker.

Yummy Fur. Film. D: Bruce McDonald. Yorktown Prods.

Zen Intergalactic Ninja. Film. D: Brian Yuzna.

Zorro. Film. D: Mikael Salomon. TriStar. S: Terry Rossio, Ted Elliott.

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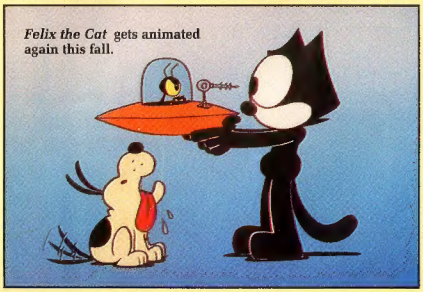

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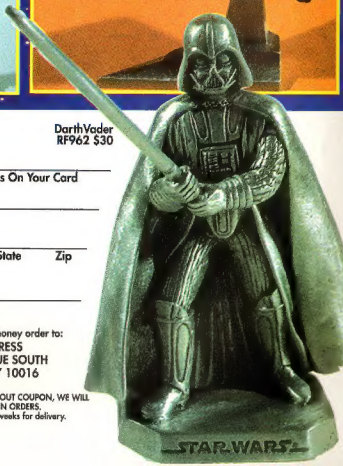

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